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THE WHISPERING GALLERY OF EUROPE

THE WHISPERING GALLERY OF EUROPE

by

MAJOR-GENERAL A. C. TEMPERLEY
C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.

With a Foreword by
The Right Honourable Anthony Eden, M.C., M.P.



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PREFACE

THE book that I have written is the record of the last fifteen years of my life in the army, when it was my fate to be concerned, in some measure, with great events. Largely at the suggestion of one of the principal actors, I have tried to set down my experiences as military adviser at Geneva to no less than four Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs.

During the few weeks that this book has been in the Press, there have been grave happenings in Europe, which react upon what I have written; the resignation of Mr. Eden, the downfall of Field Marshal von Blomberg and a number of German generals, and the threat to Austria. I have not altered the text, as history moves at such a breathless pace nowadays that the printed book is left far behind.

I desire, first of all, to thank Mr. Eden for writing a foreword. There is no man living who can speak with greater authority on the events that I have recorded.

I wish also to express my gratitude to Professor Arnold Toynbee for permission to quote two extracts from his annual *Survey of International Affairs* and for the great help that I have received from his volumes in checking historical facts.

Finally, I must give my warmest thanks to the helpers who have given me much valuable advice when reading the proofs and, especially, to Mr. John North who has revised them for me and given much encouragement and good counsel.

Beaconsfield,
March, 1938.

A. C. TEMPERLEY.

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FOREWORD

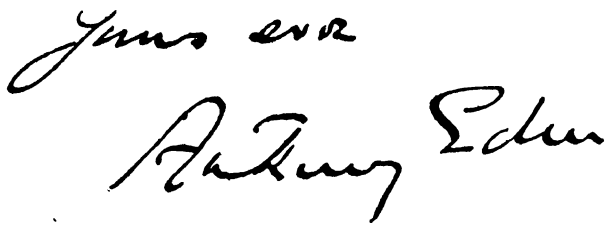
My Dear General,

Some months ago you were good enough to ask me to write a Preface to *The Whispering Gallery of Europe.* If I had some hesitation in accepting your invitation this was not due to any doubts as to your especial qualifications for the task which you had set yourself, nor as to the scrupulous fairness with which you would seek to discharge it. It was only due to the fact that you were writing a record of recent events in which we had each of us played a certain part. In such conditions it was inevitable that you should sometimes express opinions of men and events with which I should not agree.

But this is surely not what matters most. In many years at Geneva, before and during the Disarmament Conference, you were a familiar figure in the United Kingdom delegation. The position you held as chief military adviser gave you exceptional opportunities for contacts with other delegates, and you made splendid use of them. Your patience, experience and impartiality were everywhere recognised until you became something in the nature of an arbiter at Geneva in your own important sphere of duties.

Much of what you then saw and learnt you have embodied in this book. While I feel sure that you will agree that we are too near to these events to attempt to pass anything in the nature of a final judgment upon them, there can be no doubt of the value to world opinion of such an account as you have given us. I

trust that *The Whispering Gallery of Europe* may b widely read as a sincere endeavour to seek wise guidanc for the future from the chequered experience of th recent past.



March 6th, 1938.

CHAPTER ONE

THE HAGUE AND DIPLOMACY

The Hague just after the War. Experiences of a Military Attaché. Diplomacy.

My first introduction to diplomacy and international affairs, which were destined to absorb so much of my official career for the next fifteen years, was due, like so many turning points in one's life, to an accident. After the Great War was over I received a general staff appointment at Chatham in the spring of 1920, which was intended to last for four years. In the turmoil of reorganisation existing at the time I was not unduly surprised or disappointed to receive a letter a few days later to say that the appointment had been abolished. Amongst others then offered to me was that of Military Attaché at the Hague. I had only a hazy idea of the duties pertaining to the post; but it did at least offer a prospect of new experiences and a complete change from the somewhat drab peace routine in barracks, which was all that early post-war soldiering was likely to offer. I accordingly took up my duties there in May, 1920. Before doing so, however, I had seriously considered a suggestion of my old friend C. B. Thomson, afterwards Lord Thomson, the Air Minister, who met his tragic fate in the R-101. I had many talks with him in which he strongly urged me to enter political life and undertook to secure my nomination for a safe Labour seat, with the local Dean chairman of the committee as a guarantee of respectability! I had considerable leanings towards Labour, but found myself unable to swallow the large measure of nationalisation which was then the chief plank in their platform.

The Hague was at the time a place of great interest. It was also a hot-bed of international intrigue. This was largely due to its geographical position. During the war it was a neutral state on the northern flank of the contending armies and from the Dutch frontier it was possible for the Allies to send agents behind the German lines, while the Central Powers could also use it as a jumping-off place to send their agents into France and Great Britain. It had been the centre of a fierce underground struggle between the Secret Services of the two sides, each striving to defeat the other's activities. When it was all over, large numbers of their agents were out of a job and they loafed about cafés and concocted amongst themselves wild and improbable stories of alleged happenings, which they endeavoured to palm off upon the various Legations at a stiff price.

Germany had gone down in defeat only eighteen months before and the whole fabric of the state had disappeared. The Royal family had fled, the army had demobilised itself and dispersed, and the old governing classes were licking their wounds in retirement. A weak republican régime was painfully making headway against Bolshevism, famine and counter-revolution, whilst trying to collect together as large an armed force for the maintenance of internal order as the Allied Powers would permit. There had been the Kapp putsch and, just before I got to the Hague, there was the Spartacist rising in Westphalia, a Communist revolt which nearly succeeded. The Dutch were extremely well informed as to the course of events and their appreciation of them was very shrewd. They had, indeed, close racial ties with Germany; nor was sympathy lacking.

Holland throughout the war had passed through an extremely anxious time, a small country on the edge of

the vast battlefield. They had never wavered in their policy of neutrality, which they believed meant their independence. Before the War they had felt the pressure of German diplomacy and had no illusions as to the fate in store for them, if they sided with the Allies and Germany were victorious. On the other hand, if they gave Germany facilities in their territory, it meant the loss of the whole of their East Indian possessions to the Allies, from which they drew such vast revenues. Their army was the first to mobilise and, if their territory had been invaded, they would undoubtedly have fought to the last man and the last guilder. It must have been touch and go as the Dutch Hussars patrolling the frontier watched the long columns of German troops moving steadily westward in the early days of August, 1914. Would they cross the Dutch province of Limburg on the quickest route into Belgium or would they turn southwards and add to the congestion south of the Limburg peninsula rather than incur the disadvantage of creating another enemy? The question must have been carefully weighed. A neutral Holland gave them a secure flank and the possibility of continuing to trade, but delayed the advance into Belgium. A hostile Holland would have increased the strength of the Allied armies and would have given us opportunities for using their ports for operations against the Germans, unless they succeeded in overrunning Holland completely. But any such attempt would have involved a further dissipation of strength. A Dutch military critic expressed the view, backed by very convincing data, that the delay imposed upon the 1st and 2nd German Armies in going round the Limburg peninsula made them two days late at the Marne and so lost them the battle. Who knows but that the same problem will one day be again presented to the German

High Command? It would be interesting to speculate whether they would take the same decision.

If Holland were united in the view that their policy must be neutrality, their sympathies with the two combatants were divided. The upper and official classes had been on the whole pro-German. They admired the ordered and disciplined unity of the German Empire and felt that a victory for the Central Powers would entrench the governing classes in neighbouring countries in their privileged positions for another half century. Many of the Dutch aristocracy had properties near the German frontier and were allied to the Germans by ties of friendship and intermarriage. The officers of the army had long been hypnotised by the boasted military might of Germany and considered it invincible. The middle and working classes were on the whole pro-Ally. They regarded France and Great Britain as fighting for liberty and democratic government and ardently desired their victory.

During the War the Dutch had no particular cause to love either side, as they both squeezed Holland unmercifully. She was compelled to get coal from Germany, who forced her to send large quantities of food in exchange. The Allies replied by holding up Dutch shipping from the Indies and demanding the same quantities of food supplies that Germany received. The result was that Holland suffered a food shortage far in excess of anything that we experienced.

The burning question with the Dutch during my service in Holland was their relations with Belgium. Propinquity does not always promote friendship, as we learn both in private and international life. The Dutch, with their retentive memories, had never forgotten the Belgian revolt in 1830, when they broke away from the

uneasy union with Holland which the peace settlement after Waterloo had established. Yet, when the War came, the Dutch unhesitatingly received the long sombre processions of refugees from over the border and lavished kindness upon them. For the greater part of the War they housed and fed nearly a million Belgians who had fled from the German occupation. To the astonishment and indignation of the Dutch, the Belgians at the Peace Conference claimed as the spoils of victory portions of the Dutch provinces of Limburg and Zeeland. They suggested that Holland might seek compensation in a readjustment of her eastern frontier at the expense of Germany. They also asked for the freedom of the Schelde and certain economic advantages. The claim was rejected by the Allied representatives; but the whole of Holland was aflame, and relations between the two countries still suffer from the effects of this ill-advised proposal.

The question of the navigation of the Schelde is of more than passing interest and might in the future be of vital importance to us. The river runs for thirty miles from its mouth through Dutch territory and the dispute as to sovereignty has continued ever since the separation of Belgium from Holland. At the river mouth are three channels, the only one fit for big ships and the most southerly, called the Wielingen, running entirely in Belgian territorial waters. The Dutch claim that, as the river goes through Dutch territory, the sovereignty over the channel must be theirs. If that claim were sustained, the Belgians would not have access by sea to Zeebrugge in time of war, except through Dutch territorial waters; nor would Allied Powers be able to send ships either to Zeebrugge or Antwerp. If the Belgian claim were upheld in its entirety, the Dutch could not get into Flushing

without Belgian consent. Feeling ran so high that, though compromise should not have been difficult, no settlement was possible. The Belgians after the War had drunk deep of the heady wine of nationalism and demonstrations of it were frequent. I remember steamer trips to the Wielingen channel being organised from Antwerp by patriotic societies. Opposite Flushing passionate speeches would be delivered while masses of Belgian flags and emblems would be thrown into the river, so soon, alas, to be carried by the stream into the salt waters of the North Sea. A melancholy instance of the vanity of human endeavour! The phlegmatic Dutchmen gave no sign, but nothing short of military defeat could have made them surrender their provinces or their channel. Some day, as relations improve, there will no doubt be an arbitration and the channel will be divided between the two.

The work of a Military Attaché is interesting and varied. He has to study the country, its politics, its people and its military problems, and maintain good relations with its prominent soldiers. The subject, however, which dominated all else at that time was Germany and it was across the Dutch frontier that the greater part of our information about Germany came.

I had a constant stream of visitors to my office and they would have formed an excellent background to a "thriller." It included some of the most undesirable members of the international underworld. There were spies of all kinds, most of them out of a job. The stories of some of those who had been working for the Germans were at times of considerable interest. No doubt there were *agents provocateurs* among them. Then there were inventors, mad and sane. One had a scheme for converting sea water into petrol, another had invented a one-man

tank, others dealt in death-rays, gases, or Heath Robinson gadgets of all kinds. Some professed to be in the innermost circles of Communism in Germany. Two or three offered to carry out assassinations on most moderate terms. Many were prepared to sell information as to the location of secret dumps of arms in Germany. I listened to them all with care. The majority were frauds, but now and again I found some genuine cases. Occasionally Englishmen came to see me on their return from Germany and gratuitously gave me most valuable information. There were also a quantity of agents of German armament firms whose activities I came across. They were offering munitions for sale and were prepared to get them out of Germany and down the Rhine in barges in spite of the vigilance of the Inter-Allied Commission of Control. They did in fact succeed in smuggling the plant of a whole shell factory out of Germany, packed in cases, and in storing it in a disused warehouse in Holland. There were also large purchases of rough castings of guns and other war material by Dutch firms, which were frequently a cover for German interests. All these matters had to be investigated and reported.

There were a number of harrowing cases of Dutch girls married to British soldiers, who had been interned in the Hague during the War. Some had been deserted, others had returned from England because they disliked their life there. They all found their way to my office, sobbed on my shoulder, and wanted money.

Then there were Dutchmen who could not understand why they had been omitted from the list of decorations conferred by the King on Dutch subjects who had been of assistance to us in the War. These, too, had to be pacified. This extraordinary flotsam and

jetsam with which I came in contact were just the product of the times in which we lived, when the world seemed to be upside-down.

One visitor particularly remains in my memory. He was tall and distinguished-looking, with white hair, pointed beard and piercing black eyes. In appearance he was the perfect stage diplomat. He spoke English fluently and told me the following extraordinary story. He was an Austrian and had little sympathy with the Germans. Before the War his son, who was a wireless expert, was working in Belgium. When the Germans entered Belgium they took him over as an Austrian subject and employed him on wireless duties. The son then, he stated, came into possession of a very high-grade German cipher and managed to desert and cross the frontier into Holland. There he got in touch with our Intelligence Service and handed over the cipher to them. They invited him to return to Belgium to work for them. Since that date he had entirely disappeared. The father, who apparently had influential friends, proceeded with their help, after the Armistice, to get into communication with the German authorities as to the fate of his son. They informed him that, with a number of others, he had been shot at Charleroi as a spy and buried in the cemetery there. The father then went to Charleroi and obtained permission to exhume the body. Apart from other characteristics, it could not possibly have been that of his son as it was several inches too short. After many fruitless inquiries, he began to give the matter up. Then to his astonishment there began to arrive a series of messages from his son in a secret cipher known only to these two. They stated that he was in prison in England and was well treated, but that he had been told that owing to his knowledge of certain wireless and cipher

secrets of a supremely confidential character he would never be set at liberty.

The father proceeded to show me some letters which were made up of endless lines of dots and dashes. Sometimes they came in envelopes addressed to him by an unknown hand. Others he showed me were short messages in cipher on postcards or the outside of envelopes sent to him in the handwriting of friends. He was unable to explain how his son had been able to do this if he were in prison or why the friends on whose letters he had written knew nothing about him. He then asked me to make inquiries and get his son restored to him. I told him that it was quite impossible that any one could be interned indefinitely in England in time of peace without charges being made or sentence being passed upon him, but I agreed to refer it home. All the authorities, Scotland Yard, the Foreign Office and the War Office, reported, as was inevitable, that there was no truth in the story of confinement, but the name of the man was traced as having crossed into Holland and having been invited to go into Belgium and work for us. He had never returned. There was no record of a secret cipher being communicated.

I told the father the result of my inquiries, but he was not convinced and for months he continued to bring what purported to be further communications from his son. His sincerity was obvious, for he was devoting his life to the solution of the mystery. Incredible as the messages on other people's envelopes might seem, it was not easy to suppose, after knowing the man, that he himself was faking them, for he had nothing to gain thereby. Parts of his story had been confirmed from our own sources, and he always triumphantly pointed out that the exhumation showed that his son was not dead.

Whose was the body at Charleroi? Was it that of another who had been shot at the same time? Had there been a mistake about the graves?

After a lapse of time I felt there was nothing more that I could do, and I told him that I could not continue the discussion. He then transferred his activities to the American Military Attaché. A year or so later he wrote to the King, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Lord Curzon, and the letters drifted back to me for "investigation and report." The last trace I had of the poor man's obsession was some five years later, when I accidentally saw a very long letter of his in the War Office, in which he told the whole story to the Secretary of State for War and asked for justice. It remains a mystery capable of more than one solution. The father was undoubtedly suffering from hallucinations, but I do not believe that he was deliberately deceitful.

Life at the Hague was full of interest, for diplomacy was for me a new and uncharted sea. I naturally saw a good deal of the diplomats of all countries. It was an educative experience and a great help to me afterwards at Geneva.

It was my fate to work for several years with our Foreign Office people and I formed a great admiration for the Service as a whole, among whom Sir Ronald Graham, my first chief at the Hague, was a conspicuous example. They are utterly removed from the popular conception of the diplomat. I found them zealous in the public service, tolerant, liberal minded, and stout defenders of their country's interests.

Just as a soldier believes in action, which is his particular sphere, so a diplomat is inclined to rely overmuch on words as a solution for all difficulties. Now that the telegraph has destroyed the great days of diplomacy,

men are apt to gain reputations because "they send such good telegrams." The fact that our representatives are now at the end of wires may convert them to some extent into puppets: yet the force and the skill with which they present and argue the country's point of view was a revelation of their quality. From all I have seen I am convinced that our Diplomatic Service to-day stands head and shoulders above that of any other country. Next to them I would put the French; but they are so handicapped by the continual changes of government and by the extent to which internal politics permeate their Service that they are obliged to trim their sails to each fresh wind.

Foreign diplomats at the Hague I found usually to be pleasant, cultured men, with varied interests and a great, though sometimes superficial, knowledge of all political events and personalities of the last twenty or thirty years. They could talk well on most subjects and looked at the world with a genial cynicism and but few illusions. A diplomat who has passed the greater part of his life in moving from capital to capital becomes partially de-nationalised, with no great ties in his own country. One finds a curious *esprit de corps diplomatique* which seems almost to take the place of patriotism. They are not inclined to mix much with the outside world, apart from society in the capital, and are too apt to imagine that the Press represents public opinion and that, by talking to their chauffeurs, they can learn what the man in the street is thinking. In 1920 there were many new States which had been carved out of the old Empires of Central Europe. They were represented by quite different types, intelligentsia, lawyers, business men who, if they lacked the polish of the old school, made up for it in vital force and knowledge of the world.

It always seemed to me that in a new post-war world a complete break should have been made with the spacious days of lavish entertainments which were such a feature of the old diplomacy. Great Empires could afford the extensive entertainment allowances which were considered necessary to maintain their prestige. But the new States, with debased currencies of astronnomical proportions, must have found these allowances a terrible burden on their almost empty Treasuries, and morally indefensible when their miserable and starving people were being taxed for such luxuries. I remember being entertained at a wonderful dinner party given by the Minister of a country whose exchange was then 37,000 marks or crowns to the £. Flowers had been sent by aeroplane from his capital and the food and wine were superb. I calculated that it could not have cost this unfortunate country less than 1,036,000 marks. What made the situation worse was the fact that the greater part of all this expenditure was devoted to the diplomats entertaining each other rather than the people who carried weight in the country to which they were accredited.

The beginning of the post-war era was the golden moment for breaking away from the old traditions which, though a gracious feature of the Congress of Vienna, had become an anachronism amid the growing anxieties and poverty of the world to-day. There was a similar lavishness on the part of the smaller States at Geneva until the slump put an end to it. I remember on one occasion attending a colossal banquet where 375 guests were provided with champagne and every other luxury by a delegate of a poverty-stricken little state in Central America. I do not know the relation of their currency to the Swiss franc, but I could hardly

doubt that the hut tax imposed upon the wretched half-naked Indians in their pestilential swamps must at least have been doubled on this account. It represented £800 in English money.

A further waste of money, difficult to justify, was the way in which the smaller Powers maintained ministers with a whole staff of secretaries, archivists, and so on.

The rôle of a minister is primarily political and secondly commercial. One could hardly imagine that the South American and many small eastern European States had any political business or trade with Holland which a Consul could not have supervised. Ministers of such States passed their time in complete idleness, while the expenses must have been heavy. The same must apply with equal force to many other small capitals. The policy is dictated, I suppose, by a mistaken sense of prestige, and many countries undoubtedly filled the posts with an eye to getting an undesirable politician out of the way or rewarding another for his political or financial support.

To return to Holland, the results of my studies of her strategical position convince me no less strongly to-day than during my appointment there of its capital importance. The history of post-war Europe has largely been occupied by the changing fortune of Franco-German relations. The pendulum swung now to this side and now to that, the real tragedy being that a Left Government in Germany always found itself confronted by a Right Government in France. When the Left prevailed in France, power was passing to the Right in Germany as patience became exhausted.

Across the frontier the two nations still face each other with arms in their hands and fear in their hearts, as German armaments daily get stronger. The talk of

war becomes ever more insistent, the probability increases. In the last few years the French, in order to increase their security, have built the most gigantic system of fortifications along their Eastern frontier that the world has ever seen. The Belgians have continued the line to the north, though on a much more modest scale. If war were to break out it becomes increasingly improbable that Germany will fling its armies against the French fortifications. She is bound to grope for a way round. She sought it in 1914 by going through Belgium. Next time she may have to go even farther north through Holland. The stronger the Franco-Belgian fortifications become the more certain it is that the Germans will try to turn them through Holland.

The Dutch army is small, and their frontier fortifications could do no more than impose a short delay. They could never stem the tide of German invasion. Although we have declared that a cardinal point in our policy is the integrity of the Low Countries, it is problematical whether adequate support either from the French or ourselves could arrive in time to save Holland. The Germans would probably be content to turn the Franco-Belgian lines by crossing the provinces of North Brabant and Limburg, much as they crossed the Ardennes in 1914. The only satisfactory solution would be a close military understanding between Holland, Belgium and France and a strengthening of the Belgian and Dutch frontier fortifications, as well as prearranged plans for mutual support. Political conditions unfortunately make this highly improbable.

My four years in Holland were a very pleasant experience. I made very many friends among the Dutch and everywhere met the greatest kindness. The two peoples have many things in common and we instinctively

understand one another. They have a great tradition as a Colonial Power and have always been a seafaring race. Their country, which they have won from the sea and of which they are so rightly proud, is picturesque and rich in art treasures. The Rijks Museum at Amsterdam, the Franz Hals gallery at Haarlem, and the Mauritshuis at the Hague contain pictures which any capital in Europe might envy. It was with great regret that I left this pleasant land and its sturdy, independent people.

CHAPTER TWO

GERMANY ENTERS THE LEAGUE

Geneva: the early years. Locarno: Germany enters the League. Stresemann and Briand. The Secretariat. Sir Eric Drummond.

HAVING returned home in 1925, I languished on half pay for a year and was then offered an appointment on the General Staff at the War Office, to be in charge of the League of Nations section. Presumably my previous experience as a military attaché was considered to be some qualification for this post. I had no more knowledge of the League than the ordinary person of average intelligence picks up from his study of international affairs. Like many other superficial observers, I had regarded it with suspicion and my attitude to it was somewhat cynical, but I determined to examine it to the best of my ability and form my own judgment after seeing it at close quarters. I found a mass of files regarding League activities awaiting me at the War Office, and the study of these and of every book that I could discover on League subjects equipped me in some measure for my first League Assembly which was meeting a month later.

I may say now that my original suspicion of the League faded as I got to understand it better and I gradually became its firm supporter. I know the faults of the League only too well and I shall recur to them again. It has suffered most from over-enthusiastic admirers who have laid too heavy burdens upon it during its adolescent period. There is a great deal of hypocrisy and cant connected with it, but when one is withdrawn from the dust of conflict one sees the League more clearly and one

realises that most of the people there are in their own way working for the peace of the world. In those early days there was a thrill and excitement about the opening of the Assembly. The place was gay with flags, the hotels were full, the streets were thronged with visitors. Among all the nationalities that crowded Geneva it was the Americans that predominated. There was a touch of wistfulness in their attitude. They had talked and debated so long on winter evenings in their home towns on all the big social and humanitarian subjects which the League was actually handling that they seemed almost jealous that there could be so much "uplift" in the world in which they had no share. But they could not keep away. And then there were the spell-binders and the talkers of the League—how some of them wilted away when action had to replace words!—who were always in the limelight. Their very appearance in the street would cause a buzz of excited whispers and gasps of admiration from the onlookers. I am bound to say that, true to the unwritten law of the theatrical profession, they never disappointed their public and delivered the goods every time. If speeches could have made the world safe for democracy then the League would indeed have been impregnable.

The faith of the common people in the League was far greater than that of the Governments. It had been born of one of those rare moments of idealism that sweep across the world, which had been sick of the slaughter and exhausted by the strain of the war. It inspired a great hope that other means than the sword might now be found for settling disputes. There had been a number of small successes in this respect which had been distinctly encouraging. The façade of the new world order seemed at the time so secure, based as it was

on the goodwill and peace-loving instincts of the greater part of the civilised world. How drab and ordinary it all seems to-day! Gone are the great speeches in the Assembly, the crowds round the hotels and the cheering mobs at the railway station, waiting for their Briands and MacDonalds and Paul-Boncours! The limelight and the tinsel have been packed away and there are left only the anxious-faced statesmen quietly going about their business and dealing with unpleasant facts which the League in its present state cannot hope to solve and upon which the issues of peace and war depend.

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My work when at Geneva was of a threefold character. I was first of all Military Adviser to the Foreign Secretary at Geneva; secondly, observer for the General Staff at the War Office; and, thirdly, member of a body called the Permanent Advisory Commission. This had been brought into existence by Article 9 of the Covenant and consisted of the naval, military and air representatives of the States represented on the Council. It had been established owing to French pressure and had always been intended by them to form the International General Staff for the preparation of plans for the International Force, which successive French Governments were never tired of trying to foist upon the League.

When I arrived, the French drive for collective security, as they saw it, was still in full swing. They were nothing if not consistent. Their idea of the League was primarily that of a body whose main duty it was to support the *status quo* resulting from the Peace Treaties. Under this umbrella stood France and her allies and it was the duty

of every other loyal member of the League to rush to their assistance. M. Léon Bourgeois pressed it at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919: the pressure was still being maintained when I left Geneva in 1935.

There had been two set-backs. In 1923 the draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance, largely the work of Lord Cecil and General Réquin, a French officer, had been rejected by our Labour Government. Then came the Protocol in 1924. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and M. Herriot both made speeches in support of a joint resolution at the Assembly which aroused the greatest hopes of an agreement, but a careful study of their words showed that they did not really mean the same thing. The French and their friends, however, thought they had won us over at last. A sub-committee met in secret and those two arch-devotees of the French thesis, M. Benes and M. Politis, got to work. Our representatives were Mr. Henderson and Lord Parmoor. They were new to Geneva and to international affairs and it has always been my belief that they were much rushed and did not at the time understand the full import of the document that was finally produced. They contented themselves with initialling it, leaving the final decision to the Cabinet. I had strong grounds for thinking that Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, who despite his oratorical fireworks had a keen eye for his country's interests, would never have accepted it. Automatic military sanctions for all, if the Council brands a State as an aggressor, are very satisfactory for the small States and for the victim, but less so for those great Powers who would have to bear the real burden. Manchuria and Abyssinia proved how hopeless such an instrument would have been.

In the winter of 1924 came the General Election and it fell to Sir Austen Chamberlain to present the new

Government's rejection of the Protocol. It was easy to find arguments against it, but the manner was important. No one quite knew how the pill was to be gilded for a disappointed League and an infuriated France. Lord Balfour, with his habitual nonchalance, intimated at a Cabinet meeting that he had drafted a statement which might be considered. This proved to be a State paper of extraordinary value and it was adopted as the Government's case practically without alteration.

The new Conservative Government were now in a difficult position. Two schemes for collective security, to which the French attached immense importance, had been rejected out of hand and something had to be done to place our relations with France upon a better footing. She still considered that she had been betrayed by the failure of the American Senate to ratify the Treaty of Guarantee. So impressed was Sir Austen Chamberlain with the need of some positive demonstration of goodwill that he suggested to the Cabinet that we should once more offer her a defensive alliance against aggression by Germany. He found himself in a minority of one and offered to resign. What he had not then realised was that the guarantees must be the same for France and Germany and not for the former alone. The view of the Cabinet was undoubtedly correct, for public opinion would never have tolerated an exclusive arrangement of the kind, and the recent policy of France in the Ruhr and the Rhineland had alienated the greater part of the sympathy which had still existed for her in this country. At this opportune moment the German Government came forward with a suggestion for a mutual guarantee pact for the Western frontier. Here was the germ of Locarno. They agreed to accept for all time and guarantee the *status quo* in the West, which meant the abandoning of any future claim

on Alsace-Lorraine. They would not guarantee the Eastern frontier in the same way, for they hoped that one day it might be capable of peaceful readjustment, but they were prepared to undertake never to use war as a means of rectifying these frontiers. It is right to recognise the courage and magnanimity of this offer. Germany had suffered terribly. She had been through currency inflation and civil war and had seen her territory occupied in a flagrantly illegal manner. The Government was pitifully weak and the offer made could hardly have been popular. It may be doubted whether our Government at the time fully appreciated the extent of the gesture. The great change which made Locarno possible was that Poincaré had gone and two liberal-minded men like Herriot and Briand were now in charge.

It is not my purpose to attempt to describe the Locarno negotiations for I was not present, though I think that I read every word of the minutes of the meetings. The Assembly of 1925 was held immediately prior to the Locarno meeting and it was the hope of success there that created a feeling of buoyancy at Geneva. The slogan "arbitration, security, and disarmament" was much in vogue. No speech in the Assembly by the French representatives and their numerous friends was complete without a reference to it. It was always the French view that security must precede disarmament. It seemed unexceptionable logic that a country could only disarm to the extent that its armaments could be replaced by firm international guarantees. One could go on arguing *ad infinitum* as to whether disarmament would create security or security would allow of disarmament. Eventually we were reluctantly compelled, owing to French insistence, to agree to the setting up of a Preparatory Commission for

Disarmament. I remember, when Sir Cecil Hurst threw cold water on it in the 3rd Commission, Senator Henri de Jouvenel whispered to him, "*Ne vous inquiétez pas. Ça durera trois ans.*" It was actually seven years before the Conference met.

There was one other important issue at that Assembly: the settlement of the Mosul dispute. The Treaty of Lausanne had provided that, if the Northern frontier of Iraq had not been mutually agreed upon in nine months, it was to go to the Council of the League for decision. The protagonists were Mr. L. S. Amery, Secretary of State for the Colonies, on our side, and Tewfik Rushdy Bey (afterwards called Tewfik Aras), the Foreign Minister, for the Turks. A League Commission had visited the country and had recommended a frontier line very much as we had claimed. But the situation was dangerous. The Turks had massed large forces there and had pushed their troops far into the area which was undoubtedly ours. There were certainly hotheads in Turkey anxious to "jump" the claim, and it would have involved us in a major war to turn them out again. The duel between the two ministers was most interesting. Mr. Amery was cool and courteous, with every detail of the case at his finger-ends, and it was impossible to shake him. Tewfik Rushdy Bey, flashing his gold teeth everywhere, was eloquent, dramatic and full of emotional appeal. But facts were too strong for him and, though the decision was delayed by a reference to the Permanent Court for judicial advice, due to the unbending legalism of Dr. Unden, the Swede, the Council ultimately gave it in our favour. I cannot say that the verdict was popular, for there was a great deal of sympathy among the small Powers for Turkey; nor were the arguments all on our side. They thought that, as members of the "Club," we

had an unfair pull with the Council, that Briand for ulterior reasons would back us and swing the votes of his Allies on the Council to our side. We were not liked at Geneva and it was felt that it was a case of a great Power riding rough-shod over a smaller one.

The Turks for some time refused to recognise the decision and the situation remained in suspense until some suspicious troop movements by Mussolini in the Dodecanese produced a scare. They prudently decided to close down the Mosul dispute with all possible speed and were prepared to sign almost anything, in the hope of gaining our goodwill. Quite unwittingly, therefore, the Duce was the instrument of ending the strained relations and initiating a long era of cordial friendship between the two peoples.

During October, 1925, a frontier dispute occurred between Greece and Bulgaria. It afterwards became a classic, for the speed and efficiency with which it was handled by the Council was a good augury for the future. The origin was obscure, but sentries had been firing at each other and there was an unfortunate corpse which was continually being dragged from one side of the frontier line to the other as ocular proof of aggression. Balkan States are always pretty quick on the "draw," and troops began to move and guns began to go off. Early on October 23 an appeal from the Bulgarian Government, under Articles 10 and 11 of the Covenant, reached the Secretary General of the League, who got in telephonic communication with M. Briand, the acting President of the Council. The latter despatched a telegram to both Governments reminding them of their solemn obligations not to resort to war and requested that, pending a meeting of the Council, no further military movements should be undertaken and that the troops should at once

retire behind their respective frontiers. When the Council met they gave a time limit of 60 hours within which the withdrawal must be completed. A Commission was afterwards sent to the spot to assess responsibilities and they recommended that the Greek Government should pay an indemnity of £45,000. This was duly done. In point of fact M. Briand's telegram on the 23rd had only arrived just in time, for the Greek Government had ordered the troops assembled in the vicinity to attack at 8.30 the following morning and the whole of the Salonika Army Corps was moving to the frontier. The order to suspend offensive operations, owing to the arrival of the telegram from M. Briand, only reached the commander on the spot at 6 a.m., 2½ hours before the attack was due to start. It had been a near thing. The compliance of the Greek Government with what was practically an ultimatum was ensured by the knowledge that it had been secretly agreed among the Powers on the Council in Paris that, in the event of hostilities continuing, the British and French fleets were to blockade Greek ports. Like all other secret decisions of the Council it became public property in a few hours and had a decisive effect in Athens.

The faultless manner in which the dispute had been handled had somewhat far-reaching results, for it caused a great number of good friends of the League to draw some entirely false conclusions as to its powers. Indeed, it is hardly too much to say that a whole crazy edifice, to crumble later in the dust, was built on this false analogy. The League had, in fact, succeeded for two reasons; firstly, because they were small States and were unable to resist the threat of sanctions; and, secondly, because the Great Powers were united and neither of the States engaged had any "backers" among them. Had

one of them, for instance, been a member of the little Entente, the whole resources of France would have been flung into the scale to prevent strong measures. An example of this occurred in December, 1934, when there was a serious dispute between Hungary and Jugoslavia before the Council. M. Laval, the French Prime Minister, who as a member of the Council was supposed to be acting as an impartial mediator, began his opening speech with the remark that "in this dispute France is wholly on the side of Jugoslavia"! The great weakness of the League is that real impartiality is rare when passion runs high; and pressure, due to ties of alliances, interests, or prejudices, is the rule and compromise rather than justice becomes the aim.

The other lesson which was not apparent at the time was that, though the great Powers can knock the heads of two small Powers together, it is impossible to coerce a great Power which is bent on mischief.

There was one other event during this earlier or "mystic" period of the League, when I was associated with it, that made a deep impression. This was the entry of Germany. It had been a long and stony road that she had trod and her people were by no means enthusiastic. After the War was over Count Bernstorff, to his eternal credit, threw himself into the task of preaching fulfilment of the Treaty and membership of the League. He was the first and, I dare say, the last President of the German League of Nations Union. In the early days its membership must have been exceedingly small. One could hardly have blamed the Germans for regarding the League as an association of victorious States formed to hold Germany down and perpetuate the *status quo*. It was not until Stresemann took charge of the Foreign Office that the idea became anything more than a dream.

The problem then perplexing Europe was whether Germany was going eastward or westward. The Treaty of Rapallo made between Germany and Russia, the two outcasts of Europe, at the time of the Genoa Conference definitely turned Germany eastward. How odd it seems nowadays in the light of the intense antagonism at present existing between the two countries! The fear was that, if Germany went east, the combination of Soviet man power and natural resources with German organising ability might place Europe in the greatest danger. The German offer at Locarno definitely linked her fortunes with Western Europe and brought her back into the comity of nations. It seemed at long last to be "the end of the War."

A special Assembly had been summoned early in 1926, immediately following the signature of the Locarno agreements, with a view to admitting Germany to the League, and the Locarno Powers had undertaken to support her claim to a permanent seat on the Council, without which she very properly refused to enter at all. The Council consists of permanent and temporary members, the latter being elected every three years and subject to a certain rotation. The distinction between the two categories is perfectly clear; to be a permanent member it is necessary to be a Great Power. The admission of Germany appeared to be a suitable moment for Spain and Brazil to blackmail the Assembly into appointing them permanent members, in default of which they declared that they would vote against Germany. It was a complete "hold-up," for, unless a compromise could be found, Germany could not join the League until the period for which these two States had been elected members of the Council had expired. Negotiations proceeded feverishly in hotel sitting-rooms, when there

ought to have been plain speaking in the Assembly, and Sir Austen Chamberlain sat all day in conference with the Locarno Powers to try to get the Germans to reduce their demands, while the two gangster States refused to move. The Assembly had to adjourn in very discreditable circumstances and it was not until the ordinary Assembly in September that it was possible to vote Germany into the League and the Council. A compromise had been found of creating three semi-permanent seats which had been intended for Poland, who had behaved with perfect propriety throughout, Brazil and Spain. The two latter did not wait for their illgotten gains but resigned from the League as a protest, though Spain returned before two years had elapsed. The whole incident was a sordid one, which revealed some extremely unpleasant influences at work beneath the surface at Geneva.

The Salle de la Reformation, where the Assembly used to meet, is not an inspiring stage for a great occasion. There was not a window that would open in the hall. It was very hot outside and within the hall, packed with excited people, it was stifling. The Council had chosen M. Briand as the spokesman of the League to welcome the Germans. As representative of their ancient enemy and one of the architects of Locarno, it was an admirable selection. After the voting preliminaries were over and the credentials had been scrutinised, the thick-set figure of Herr Stresemann, with the square Prussian head and curious light-blue eyes, followed by the burly and rubicund Schubert, the Under Secretary of the Foreign Office, could be seen forcing their way through the dense crowd near the platform. The German delegation took their appointed seats and M. Briand stepped on to the tribune to bid them welcome. I can

say with confidence that it was the finest speech the Assembly has ever listened to. It was delivered without a note. His rich and beautiful voice dropped at times almost to a whisper as he pleaded for peace on earth, then rose again to a clarion note as he proclaimed the birth of a new era.

"*C'est fini la guerre entre nous!*" Then again, "*C'est fini la guerre entre nous! C'est fini les longs voiles de deuil sur les souffrances qui ne s'apaiseront jamais sur la surface de nos pays; plus de guerres, plus de solutions brutales, violentes, sanglantes, pour régler nos différends qui, certes, n'ont pas disparu. Désormais, c'est le juge qui dira le droit. Arrière les fusils, les mitrailleuses, les canons! Place à la conciliation et la paix! . . .*"

That superb orator could play like a master on the heart-strings of his audience and none of them could remain unmoved. As we went out again into the bright sunlight of Geneva we felt that we had witnessed one of the great turning points of history.

A few days later the two statesmen, evading journalists and officials, took the road to Thoiry, a little hamlet on the French side of the frontier, nestling at the foot of the Jura. There, after a luncheon such as only a French wayside inn can produce, Briand and Stresemann talked of the future of their two countries through a long summer's day. Old controversies vanished in the frank exchanges and a future friendship and co-operation seemed assured. For some time after the promise of Thoiry seemed likely to be fulfilled. But Briand was old and tired and tended to shirk difficulties, while the shadows of ill-health began to close round his colleague. Behind both of them an uneasy political situation began to develop which caused the bright hopes to fade.

These two great men, the German and the French-

man, did work together wholeheartedly for the peace of Europe, but they were always complaining about each other. Briand used to say that he was greatly disappointed in Stresemann because directly you made him a concession he always used it as a sort of springboard from which to demand something else. Stresemann was wont to complain that, though Briand was a sincere man and devoted to peace and reconciliation, he lacked the drive and force of character to carry things through. Perhaps the truth of the matter may be found in the fact that in all the discussions between the Germans and the Allies it was inevitable that the former must always be asking, the latter occasionally but not invariably conceding. It was a fantasy of mine that somewhere in Stresemann's desk there must have been a chart headed "Winning the Peace." On this chart would have been methodically entered the sequence of the German demands and the dates on which they would be put forward: withdrawal of control, evacuation of the Rhineland, release from disarmament, reparations, and so on. The chart is doubtless carried on and punctually marked up by Herr Hitler, though the dates have been moved forward and a far more ambitious programme has been staked out for the coming years!

Stresemann was a genial, convivial spirit when he was in good health. He loved to visit the bar at the Hungaria when in Geneva and drink beer and fraternise with the journalists. He was always excellent company. I remember him telling a story of Hindenburg. He was asked if the old Marshal ever gave trouble or interfered in foreign policy. Stresemann said, "Only one day in the year. The day after he attends the regimental dinner with his old comrades of the 3rd Foot Guards, he rings the bell and sends for me. 'Stresemann, the French must be

out of the demilitarised zone by 3 p.m. to-morrow afternoon.' I merely reply, 'Very good, Sir.' I never hear any more of the subject until the next anniversary."

Some time ago a speaker on the Labour side in the House of Commons claimed that the deterioration in the international situation had dated from the departure of Arthur Henderson from the Foreign Office. Mr. Eden replied that he thought it had started with the death of Stresemann. This was a profound truth. So long as Briand remained in power and Stresemann lived the link between the two countries was not broken, the possibility of a rise of the Nazis to power being remote. When Stresemann came to his last Assembly in 1929 it was only too apparent that the hand of death was upon him and, when he died shortly after, almost the last hope of peace in the West disappeared. Soon after the arrival of the Nazis in power in 1933 there was a debate upon their excesses in the House of Commons, in which Sir Austen Chamberlain appealed to the memory of Gustave Stresemann. I wondered at the time whether he had ever read his letter, written just before the Locarno Conference, to the ex-Crown Prince. It has only recently been published in this country, though it appeared abroad in 1932. Why it has never attracted attention here I do not know. It was extraordinary to read that Stresemann declared that he was only renouncing Alsace and Lorraine "because there is no possibility of war against France." He described the "renunciation as theoretical only," because "we lack the military might." The reason for going to Locarno was "to free the land from foreign occupation." The whole negotiations were to be conducted with "finesse." The apparent duplicity of his attitude towards Briand and Chamberlain which

this letter reveals forces one to review the sincerity of his subsequent conduct. Yet if ever a man gave his life for peace it was Stresemann. His action may have been a passing phase or a temporary reversion to his extreme nationalistic outlook of the War period. Alternatively, the deception may have been practised upon the ex-Crown Prince and the Nationalist clique, while his attitude at Locarno was sincere. This would indeed have been Machiavellian. The letter, at any rate, is inconsistent with everything known of his later political life and it remains to me a complete mystery.

The Secretariat at Geneva were an interesting study. Recruited from some forty nations and numbering about six hundred of both sexes, they were the first attempt at an International Civil Service. In the early days large numbers of them were hardly concerned with pay and prospects but were burning with the purest flame of a desire to serve humanity. There were many outstanding figures in the ranks who could have commanded large salaries elsewhere but were content to follow an ideal at Geneva. Most of them have by now sought fresh fields of activity. It was impossible for this fervour to last indefinitely, particularly when the actual work of the individual was not very inspiring. Eventually, those that remained settled down to the usual routine of the civil servant, though in the higher ranks many preserved their feeling of a great mission.

It could hardly be expected that a body consisting of so many races, without any background or *esprit de corps*, could exist without considerable friction and intrigue. It may take a generation before it has established the traditions of a Civil Service. Feeling invariably runs high when promotions are made or dismissals are considered, or even when rises in salary are applied for. In many

cases, though not in those of British nationality, the resources of the country concerned, both in the Secretariat and of the Government, are mobilised behind the individual, irrespective of the merits of the case. This makes discipline and the ordinary flow of promotion extraordinarily difficult. Furthermore, the higher posts are rationed between the nations; the selections are political and practically made by the Governments concerned, though nominally by the Secretary General. Candour also demands that it should be recorded that the nationals of the majority of States regard themselves as the outposts of their own Foreign Offices, rather than the servants of the League. This could have been corrected by definitely giving the members of the Secretariat a life's career, with a pension at the end. But to the ambitious the temptation is insufficient, as the extreme limit to which the ordinary man or woman can rise is a post of £1200 a year, the higher ones all being political nominees. The tendency has been to have short-term contracts which bring in continual new blood but it does not make for *esprit de corps*.

On the whole the intellectual level of the Secretariat is extremely high and the work done, particularly in the economic and social sections, is quite remarkable. Until three years ago the Secretariat had been much over-staffed, with the consequence that the lower grades had not enough to occupy their time, though the senior members have nearly always been overworked. In addition to the purely secretarial duties, the most arduous and delicate part is the preparation of documents for the different committees and conferences, giving the previous history of the thousand and one matters with which the League has to deal. They are invariably objective and informative. The staff work is indeed of the highest

quality. The League is a generous employer. Its servants are paid at the rates of the British Civil Service, probably the highest in the world. They pay no taxes in Switzerland and so receive their salaries intact. To members of European States leave is given annually to the countries concerned, at the expense of the League. To the more remote countries, such as South America or Australia or New Zealand, fares for members and their wives are paid every three years. Members of the Secretariat are most hospitable to the delegations visiting Geneva, and friendships formed there are some of my most agreeable recollections of the League.

The Secretary General is the pivot not only of the Secretariat but of the League itself. Sir Eric Drummond held this post for thirteen years. He was nominated by the "Big Four" at the Peace Conference and shares with the ex-Kaiser and three other legendary figures the distinction of being the only individuals mentioned by name in the Treaty of Versailles. These were M. Rouher, a former French Minister, whose papers had been removed from the Château of Coucy during the War, the Caliph Othman, and Mkwawa, a Sultan of Zanzibar, whose skull the Germans were alleged to have removed. The story of the appointment is amusing and, if it is not true, it certainly ought to be. The selection was discussed by the Big Four and the post was offered to Sir Maurice Hankey, then acting as a Secretary at the Peace Conference. It was declined by him and after a good deal of inconclusive talk M. Clemenceau said to Mr. Balfour, "Who is that fellow who stands behind your chair and never opens his mouth? He has at least one qualification for the post." Mr. Balfour replied, "That is Sir Eric Drummond, my private secretary." And this incident led to his nomination.

Few men could have borne a greater burden during the earlier period of the League than Sir Eric Drummond. There were no precedents to quote, no chiefs upon whom to lean for guidance or advice. When the Council or the Assembly were not in session the whole weight fell upon Sir Eric's shoulders. He had a Civil Service of a somewhat motley character to recruit, a Council and an Assembly to guide in their first steps towards establishing a code of procedure, and above all there was the pressure of great political issues waiting to be solved, which might make or mar the new institution.

I do not think that Sir Eric was very imaginative or highly strung, which was perhaps fortunate for him, or he could hardly have stood the endless strain. It was his habit to do all that mortal man could do and then go off and play a round of golf and forget all about his worries! He was less interested in organisation and administration than in the political side of his work. Here his success was remarkable. His Foreign Office training stood him in good stead. His resource never failed when difficulties were greatest and his judgment was extremely accurate. We shall never know how many political secrets of all countries were confided to him by anxious delegates, for he was universally trusted and his advice was constantly sought. His last two years were clouded by League difficulties, and the Manchurian crisis visibly told upon him. He did not make the mistake of hanging on too long. There come times in most men's lives when the moment arrives to lay down a task, and he left Geneva at the height of his prestige and influence. He may not be a great man as measured by some of the more considerable figures at Geneva, for he lacks a magnetic personality, readiness of speech or brilliance of thought, but he was the ideal Secretary

General. Unemotional, cautious and shrewd, he was a typical Scot, who concealed beneath the surface a vision and a fire which his great office had inspired in him.

When he returned home it seemed wrong that a man who had held a unique international position for all those years should descend again into the arena and fight and plan for his country's interests, as an ambassador is bound to do. I personally hoped that His Majesty's Government would have seen fit to recommend him for some great Imperial position, such as Governor General of a Dominion. But it was not to be. He was made Ambassador in Rome, which seemed to be the worst post, if the whole world had been ransacked, that it was possible to choose for him. Signor Mussolini was even then planning the Abyssinian campaign and anything to do with Geneva aroused his hostility and contempt. Whatever the skill of our diplomatic representative might be, the barrier between him and the Duce was increased a hundredfold by the fact that he was the embodiment of the League. Sir Eric Drummond was in a difficult position and our relations must have suffered in consequence. A rigid adherence to some roster of seniority or possibly his own desire to return to the Diplomatic Service may have been responsible for the apparent blunder. As Lord Fisher said on a famous occasion, "We shall lose the Empire some day, because it is Buggins's turn."

CHAPTER THREE

DISARMAMENT

Disarmament: the first stages. Anglo-French differences. Lord Cecil: his resignation from the Cabinet.

As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, the first definite moves towards disarmament took place in the Assembly of 1925. The word itself is a loose description of the process more accurately described as limitation and reduction of armaments. The members of the League were definitely pledged under Article 8 of the Covenant to "the reduction of armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety and the enforcement by common action of international obligations. The Council, taking account of the geographical situation and circumstances of each State, shall formulate plans for such reduction. . . ." Equally categorical is the Preamble to the Disarmament Clauses of the Peace Treaties, which runs, "In order to render possible the initiation of a general limitation of the armaments of all nations, Germany (Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria) undertakes strictly to observe the military, naval, and air clauses which follow."

Information was sought by the German delegate to the Peace Conference, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, as to the precise meaning of this pronouncement. On June 16th, 1919, M. Clemenceau, on behalf of the Allied and Associated Powers, wrote as follows: "The Allied and Associated Powers wish to make it clear that their requirements in regard to German armaments were not made solely with the object of rendering it impossible for Germany to renew her policy of military aggression. They are also the first steps towards that general reduc-

tion and limitation of armaments which they seek to bring about as one of the most fruitful preventatives of war and which it will be one of the first duties of the League of Nations to promote."

The two latter quotations were of the greatest importance later on, as it was upon them that Germany based her contention that she had disarmed in the faith of a formal promise on the part of the Allies to do their share. If they failed in that respect, Germany would no longer be bound herself.

The Law Officers of the Crown had recorded their view that the Preamble to the Disarmament Clauses constituted no *legal* undertaking to disarm, but, read in conjunction with M. Clemençeau's letter, most reasonable people would agree that the obligation was morally very strong and one that we could not really evade. M. Paul-Boncour, indeed, admitted this in a speech at Geneva, which gave the German delegates great satisfaction and got him into considerable trouble in Paris. I once took the trouble to ascertain how the Preamble, which caused us all an infinity of trouble, had crept into the Treaty. I believe that M. Fromageot, the legal adviser to the French Foreign Office, had produced it one day during the drafting discussions in Paris without realising its profound significance and it had slipped into the Treaty with very little comment. Our international lawyers apparently differ from the Continental school in the view the former hold that a Preamble is only material in so far as it tends to interpret an obligation contained in the body of the Treaty and that it cannot constitute a fresh one. This was no doubt the basis of the Law Officers' opinion. The real promises to disarm were quite unequivocal, though in the case of Article 8 they were qualified by phrases regarding national

safety. This proved to be the link between disarmament and security upon which the French were always insisting and which occupied so many months of lengthy discussion at Geneva. No one could deny the obvious connection, but, if the world was to wait for absolute watertight security before reducing a man or a gun, it was certain that there would never be any disarmament at all. I propose to devote a subsequent chapter to the security question.

In the autumn of 1925 the Council of the League set up the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference. It was to consist of the States represented on the Council, numbering twelve, and some other States with a special interest in disarmament; invitations were also issued to the United States, Germany, and Russia, making seventeen in all. The two former accepted and the latter declined. By 1927 the number had grown to twenty-five, and France had taken good care to ensure that all the smaller States revolving in her orbit should secure seats in order to gain support for her policy. Only one dominion, Canada, was to be a member. The Commission consisted of six Great Powers and, of the smaller ones, Europe provided eleven, Asia one, South America six, and the Dominions one.

The reason for Soviet Russia's refusal was her dissatisfaction with the attitude of the Swiss Government at the time of the assassination of Vorovski, the Bolshevik official observer at the Lausanne Conference. They complained, in the first place, that he had not been properly guarded and secondly that the trial and acquittal of the White Russian, Conradi, charged with the murder, had been a gross miscarriage of justice. They refused to have any relations with Switzerland until reparation had been made. If the truth be told, the trial had been

very unsatisfactory and had developed into an anti-Bolshevik demonstration. Although there was no doubt that the prisoner had done the deed, he was triumphantly acquitted. The stand made by the Bolsheviks for the purity of the administration of justice was not without humour. Consequent on the Bolshevik refusal to join the Commission, the French Government proceeded to bring pressure to bear on the Swiss, who argued that no Government could apologise for the acts of its judges, who must be presumed to administer the law faithfully. After a good deal of discussion some expression of regret was made and compensation was paid to the unfortunate man's family. The Russians joined the Commission for its fourth session in November, 1927.

By way of terms of reference, the Council drafted a questionnaire in the style beloved of the Latin mind, which is taught always to proceed from the general to the particular and settle principles first. The Anglo-Saxon mind, however, mistrusts them deeply and tries to get a grip of the practical points at once. "Never discuss principles with a Frenchman" was one of Lord Cecil's golden rules at Geneva. The questions were, as might be expected, highly academic. They called for a definition of "armaments." Could the ultimate war-strength, or the "war potential" as it came to be called, be subject to limitation? What standard of measurement could be employed for comparing armaments? Could a distinction be made between offensive and defensive armaments? Was it possible to establish a ratio of armaments for each State, taking into account such factors as population, resources, geographical position, colonies, vulnerability of frontiers, and maritime communications? It will be seen that there was an infinite field for the dialectician, without ever reaching any really

practical issue. I do not think that the French consciously forced these questions upon the Commission as a time-wasting device, but to the Anglo-Saxons and Nordic races the weeks and months spent in almost useless theoretical debate proved extremely irritating.

The tactics of the French throughout the ten years of the disarmament discussions were extremely interesting to watch. They had pressed them upon the League in the first instance and in the earlier years they dominated the Commission by the wealth of their contributions to the debate, by the ingenuity of their proposals and by the strong support that they were able to marshal behind them. They were ably led by M. Paul-Boncour. Their team, consisting of the Little Entente, Poland, and Belgium, was then organised just like a Parliamentary group and the Party whips were excellent. Speakers intervened just at the right moment to support a French proposal and they always voted straight. It was said in the Naval Sub-Commission that a Czechoslovak general, masquerading for the moment as an admiral of a non-existent navy, read an impassioned harangue upon the limitation of cruisers from a typewritten document, at the head of which was printed "Délégation Française. Société des Nations. Genève"! This rigid discipline was to wane as the years went on and the pupils tired of their none too tactful mentor.

The French had studied disarmament far more carefully than had any other nation and some of the best brains of their General and Naval staffs and Foreign Office had been engaged for months in research. The bogey of Germany is never far from the French mind in international affairs and one can hardly wonder at it. To put their problem brutally, their object was to do as little disarmament as possible themselves, although

they were the most formidable military Power in the world, while at the same time keeping Germany by hook or by crook in a state of disarmament corresponding more or less to the terms of the Peace Treaty. It was an ambitious aim, but their fertility of ideas was extraordinary. Mark the question of the war potential! Here was a golden opportunity for developing the theory that the late war had proved that what really counted was not so much the men as the raw material and organised industry. Here was poor France, primarily an agricultural nation; and look at Germany, with its coal and iron, its chemical industry, its Ruhr and its Krupps! France had perhaps a slightly more numerous army, but what was that compared with the enormous war potential beyond the Rhine?

Look again at the question about a ratio of armaments for each State, taking into account such factors as population, resources, geography, colonies, density of railways, length of maritime communications, vulnerability of frontiers. There is no doubt that at one time the French had in mind the idea of establishing a numerical co-efficient for the armaments of each Power. So many marks were to be given under each heading and the higher the total the less the armaments, and vice versa. It was all very ingenious. One could not help thinking, as the scheme was expounded, that somehow or other x for France would come out at somewhere near her present armaments and for Germany the armaments of the Peace Treaty! To carry it to its logical conclusion, one need only compare a country like Denmark—with no minerals, no heavy industry, long frontier in proportion to population, low man-power and small financial resources—with the U.S.A., which has an abundance of everything that Denmark lacks. The end of

it could only be that Denmark should have a standing army of half a million, while the U.S.A. should be limited to 10,000! France was not the only Power to exhaust the possibilities of *x*. The Dutch produced the famous "fogs and bogs" memorandum, when they claimed more armaments because their climate and subsoil were both unfavourable. The Roumanians considered that national courage and the military spirit, or the lack of it, should also be assessed in the "war potential," but did not indicate whether they would claim more or less armaments for themselves on this account. None could deny that there was logically something in the French thesis, but it would always have been impossible to get any practical results from it. By degrees the questionnaire disappeared from the discussions, though M. Paul-Boncour used occasionally to remind the Commission, when we appeared to be getting on rather well, that there was still his beloved "Question cinq," dealing with ratios, to be discussed.

The first step was a formal meeting of the Preparatory Commission in May, 1926, which referred the questionnaire, slightly modified, to Sub-Commission A, which was to consist of the naval, military and air experts of the delegations, and certain economic questions to Sub-Commission B.

Sub-Commission A commenced its meetings at once and sat with two short breaks until September 27th. With my naval and air colleagues I represented the United Kingdom. Much ridicule was heaped upon this Sub-Commission at the time by politicians and by the Press, because we actually took some four months to solve all the problems connected with disarmament. We were compared to a congress of butchers drafting rules for a vegetarian community, and various other lumbering

witticisms of a similar character were launched at us. Yet when the politicians tried their hands, they took four years to get a draft convention and another three to fail completely. No one realised the difficulties at the time.

The report of 150 pages which we produced was by no means a perfect document and opinion was so divided that much of it is written in parallel columns. There is, however, to be found in it a complete survey of the technical possibilities of disarmament by land, sea and air, with the pros and cons of each method closely and clearly argued. Yet I have come across few students of disarmament who ever bothered to read it. Soldiers, sailors and airmen, like other experts, are not ideally fitted for Commissions, as they are not trained as debaters and, being wed to discipline, are apt to adhere more rigidly to instructions than politicians are accustomed to do. Deadlocks are more frequent and compromises more rare. In this particular case the instructions of many representatives had a very definite political flavour, while all of them had doubtless been warned by their Service chiefs what particular points they were to fight for or oppose in the interests of their own Services. Señor Madariaga remarked on one occasion that "technical arguments are only political arguments dressed up in uniform." This is as true as it is inevitable. The remedy is that technicians should not be employed to do political jobs, which are certainly not of their seeking.

The relations between us all during that hot and tedious Geneva summer were on the whole very pleasant. There was a genuine camaraderie between the various members which I have never seen in political commissions, due to our common service in the profession of arms. I made many enduring friendships, particularly among the French, German, American and Dutch

delegations. Throughout my time at Geneva the relations between Service representatives of France and Great Britain were invariably excellent, whatever might be the fluctuations of the political barometer. I will omit further reference to Sub-Commission A, as the problems hammered out there came up again on the larger stage of the Preparatory Commission at its next meeting.

During the autumn of 1926 and early spring of 1927 the Government, warned some time before by Lord Cecil, had to prepare its own attitude towards disarmament, which would be expounded at the forthcoming meeting of the Preparatory Commission. A good deal of work had been done in the War Office by myself and others. Our problem differed from that of the Admiralty because our army was so small and had been so reduced, even below the modest size of 1914, that no scheme of disarmament could touch it. Our task, therefore, was to come to some conclusions about what would be an honest and effective scheme of disarmament, which could be pressed upon the other delegations at Geneva with some hope of success. The discussions in Sub-Commission A had given me a clear indication of the probable attitudes of the most interested Governments and of the sort of opposition which we might expect to meet.

The supervision of all disarmament policy seemed to have been confided by Sir Austen Chamberlain, then Foreign Secretary, to Lord Cecil, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, whose passionate interest in it and in all League questions was well known. Sir Austen, as far as I could see, almost washed his hands of the whole subject. It never seemed to me that the two men were very sympathetic to each other's views and he may well have thought it better not to interfere with what

would obviously be an extremely thorny and difficult subject.

A Sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence was formed, under the chairmanship of Lord Cecil, to draft instructions for the next meeting at Geneva, for the approval of the Cabinet. I represented the War Office. It was chiefly memorable to me for being the beginning of that long, but occasionally interrupted, collaboration with Lord Cecil which continues to-day in support of the League, though I have now retired from official life. There are many more qualified than I to give an estimate of this remarkable Englishman: I can only set down my own feelings. Lord Cecil has an extraordinarily impressive personality, perhaps the most striking of any of the great men I have ever met. He is not an orator in the strict sense of the word, but his speeches give an extraordinary feeling of sincerity and idealism which have a profound and moving effect upon an audience. He is certainly the greatest living figure at the League, as the long roll of cheers that used to greet his presence at the tribune invariably testified. The tall ascetic figure with the bowed shoulders, the magnificent head and the sensitive, nervous hands, all go to complete an unforgettable picture of a man, sprung from a long line of great statesmen, who has devoted his life to a holy cause, no less than the regeneration of the world. Yet the austerity of his outlook never prevented him descending into the arena and playing the rôle of the astute politician when the end justified the means. I know no more subtle delegate round the table at Geneva; for he is a master of League procedure and knows every move in the game. He has an elfish sense of humour that displays itself most unexpectedly. There is, indeed, a levity about him, even at the most

serious moments, which makes one wonder at times whether in his heart of hearts it is not all an extremely amusing game. He has an extraordinary detachment, as witness his proposal in the House of Lords that every town or village should have the right to dig a trench across all main roads in order to force motorists to reduce speed or break their back axles. Was it an elaborate joke or a reversion to feudalism? He appeared to be in deadly earnest. He has too individualistic a mind to run particularly well in harness; and for all his democratic views he is, I think, personally though not politically, an autocrat at heart.

Lord Cecil has boundless patience and courtesy with slow-thinking people: he will always see even the humblest who desires an interview and will listen to the most rambling and incoherent statements, which he will take immense pains to unravel. In spite of the subtlety of his intellect, I have not always been able to follow him in his measurement of men or forces; but whether one agrees with him or not, one can never fail to have a real affection for him as a man and admiration for his unselfish devotion to the cause of peace.

The Preparatory Commission met in May, 1927, and was at last to get to grips with the substance of the matter. The two men who were to dominate the discussions were Lord Cecil and M. Paul-Boncour, the French representative. M. Paul-Boncour was at the time a deputy and a Socialist. He had a very large practice at the criminal bar in Paris and considerable political ambitions. He was a great orator in the classic style in the Assembly and in the earlier years his speeches, invariably delivered without a note, were great histrionic performances. As time went on they grew longer and longer; he lost his magic touch and became almost tedious. In the

Preparatory Commission he was also accustomed to put the French case at great length, though he would rarely debate or argue and, much to Lord Cecil's annoyance, he would never bother to listen to what other people said. He never struck me as being particularly able, though he was certainly tenacious. He was a picturesque-looking man, small in stature and rather like an actor, with a head of abundant white, curly hair and a fine, clear-cut profile. He subsequently became a Senator, Minister of War, Minister of Foreign Affairs and, for a brief period, Prime Minister. Events have shown that he was no fair-weather friend of the League, for when it fell on evil days he was still to be found at Geneva as an ardent supporter. He was perhaps less successful in understanding our peculiar British psychology than any other prominent Frenchman, though it was from no lack of a desire to co-operate with us. He waged unending war on *courants d'air* and in the overheated rooms, if ever a British delegate succeeded in getting a fraction of a window open, he would ostentatiously send for his enormous motor-coat and sit and cower within its ample folds!

Count Bernstorff, the German representative, was an entirely different type, a product of the Imperial Court and the old diplomacy. There was nothing courtier-like in his speeches, which stated with uncompromising brusqueness the position of his country: that they had disarmed in the faith of Allied promises to do likewise and that they were waiting impatiently for them to be fulfilled. The arguments were mostly on his side and in the cut and thrust of debate he was unequalled. It would perhaps be more accurate in his case to use the simile of the bludgeon than the sabre. There was a good deal of prejudice against him at first, which his aggressive atti-

tude did nothing to alleviate; but we learnt to respect his forceful personality and his integrity of purpose. When he first came to Geneva, I am ashamed to say that I tried to avoid shaking hands with him; yet as the months went by I grew to like and respect him and to feel that in this great Liberal diplomat and statesman there might be one of the makers of the new Germany. *Dis aliter visum.* The shadows have fallen round him and he is compelled to pass the evening of his life on alien soil near the arena in which he spent himself for the rehabilitation of his country and the peace of the world.

Another prominent figure in the Commission was Mr. Hugh Gibson, the representative of the U.S.A. He was an ambassador in Brussels, a great personal friend of Mr. Hoover, the President, and he had fought for the life of Miss Edith Cavell in Brussels during the War with tenacity and courage. His almost inhumanly polished and suave exterior concealed a singularly able and resourceful mind. He was chiefly interested in the naval side and took strong exception to our proposals later on but was generally ready to support us on other questions in our long duels with the French.

The Preparatory Commission was due to open, according to the usual Geneva and French procedure, with a general discussion, during which each delegation would state their point of view. Both Lord Cecil and M. Paul-Boncour had come armed with a draft Convention which was supposed to represent the views of their Governments. The two delegates had exchanged their drafts in confidence and M. Boncour had begged Lord Cecil to hold his back at least until the general discussion was over. At the same time, to make things as difficult as possible, he communicated Lord Cecil's document to the French Press, who proceeded to launch a full-dress attack upon

the British Government for trying to destroy the French Army. Lord Cecil, in reply, immediately circulated our draft, which forced the French to do the same and the battle was joined. M. Paul-Boncour did not in fact wish to prepare a draft Convention at all and thought that the Commission should confine itself to preparing a series of "instructions" for the Conference.

The greater part of my story of the disarmament discussions will deal with the reduction of land armaments. This is not primarily due to the fact that it was my particular sphere, but because they bulked far larger in the public eye, occupied the greater part of the time and provoked the greatest passion and differences of opinion. Naval armaments were regarded as a separate issue for the Naval Powers and they had already been partially dealt with at Washington. The air was looming large in importance, but the methods of air disarmament were, comparatively speaking, simple. Land disarmament is, on the contrary, an extraordinarily complex matter. The personnel of the conscript armies are chiefly reservists in civil life and can only be reduced, as the Belgian delegate pointed out, by exporting them or cutting off their heads! Particular articles of material, such as guns, machine-guns, rifles, etc., are so small in size that their manufacture and storage are extremely easy to conceal, as the Inter-Allied Control Commission in Germany learnt to their cost. They never succeeded in finding Big Bertha or her sister, the long-range gun that shelled Paris, though Germany was combed from end to end and it was known that the Germans had extricated them from France. It follows that it is extremely difficult to decide upon methods which are likely to be effective.

The French arrived at Geneva with the idea firmly

fixed in their minds that Great Britain and the United States had hatched a plot to use the Conference to cut down the French Army to the bone, while safeguarding the supremacy of their own navies by private agreements as to the tonnage which they intended to keep. They accordingly devised an ingenious formula called "the interdependence of armaments," which was to ensure that all ratios, reductions, strengths and so on, were to be applied to armaments as a whole and not to any one particular Service. They had no real desire to see our Navy reduced, but they were determined to threaten it if we made a general attack upon the overwhelming strength of the French Army. There was, of course, up to a point good logic in the contention about interdependence, but they were so obsessed with it that for some time they would not allow separate discussions, nor could any land, naval or air Sub-Commissions be formed. They even went to the length of insisting that in the Convention which we were trying to draft, the effectives of all three Services should be lumped together in one chapter, the material in another, and the expenditure in a third. This fantastic arrangement was retained until we drafted our own British Convention in March, 1933, when it was set out in the only practical way with separate chapters for each Service. The so-called plot existed only in the lively imaginations of the French Delegation.

The burning question into which the Commission at once plunged was whether the trained reserves of an army should be considered for limitation purposes. This particular discussion kept recurring whenever effectives were discussed; the French resisted it to the utmost and in the end successfully. It was of fundamental importance, and it is worth while making the significance of it clear,

even at the cost of descending to detail. The conscript army trains the annual contingent for a fixed period, say a year, and the men are then transferred to the reserve till they are, say, forty-five years of age. During their reserve service they are civilians, but they are called up at stated intervals to brush up their military knowledge. These reserves, on mobilisation, rejoin the army and constitute nine-tenths of the soldiers in the ranks. In the case of France they number about five millions. The army is, in fact, little more than a cadre acting as a training establishment for recruits and a reserve-producing machine. Any disarmament proposal which was confined to limitation of the troops actually in barracks and did not in some way limit the trained reserves was obviously ineffective. We pressed this point very strongly and were supported by the Americans and a number of the smaller Powers. Germany, who had no trained reserves, was wholeheartedly on our side. The French could hardly ignore the force of this argument, but they countered it by saying that reserves are only one of the elements of the "war potential" and that it was unfair to pick them out and leave the rest of them on one side. They declared that well-organised industries, raw materials and financial and economical strength, must also be limited if reserves of men were to be touched. This was, of course, particularly directed at Germany, a country of formidable strength on the industrial side but forbidden by treaty to have any human reserves.

Lord Cecil agreed that it was not possible to "untrain" reserves that had already been trained, but suggested that the real solution was the abolition of conscription, which would get rid of the whole system of the nation in arms. We knew that, apart from the Americans, we should get no support for this in any quarter, but we felt bound to

put the true solution of militarism to the Commission, the one that we imposed upon Germany in spite of her passionate protests. The French and other delegations declared that the abolition of conscription was not a discussable question. It was regarded universally as the only democratic method of recruiting an army and was also extremely cheap. Even such pacific countries as Holland, Switzerland and Sweden maintained that it was impossible to abandon the principle of conscription, which was the only form of service which their people would accept. The universal contention that conscription was the essence of democracy had never occurred, I think, to Lord Cecil and it came as a surprise to him. The French soldiers pointed out to me privately that voluntary service called up in the minds of Frenchmen bitter memories of the Second Empire and of *coups d'état*. The further the French Government moved to the Left, the more they would insist upon universal service.

Before this storm we were compelled to bow and Lord Cecil then brought forward our alternative proposal for limiting the size of conscript armies, which was to reduce substantially in each country the strength of the annual contingent, as well as the number of officers and long-service N.C.O.s and men. This would, in course of time, reduce the number of trained reserves. It is by no means a universal practice to call up annually every available man who is medically fit. Germany did not do so before the war and many countries do not to-day. France on the other hand, with her smaller numbers vis-à-vis Germany, has always summoned every available man. We could, I think, have got a majority in the Commission to accept the reduction in the annual contingent as a means of reducing the size of the armies, but it was useless to press it in the face of the passionate opposition of the

French and their obedient satellites. It was with them again a democratic principle. General Réquin, my French colleague, told me that the idea of *égalité* in service was vital to them. Every Frenchman hated military service so much that they would never tolerate it if there were exemptions on a large scale or if they were chosen by lot. No French Government could remain in office a week which proposed to abandon this sacred principle. This was no doubt perfectly true, but I could not help inquiring for what purpose we were discussing land armaments at all and why the French had foisted a Disarmament Conference on the League, if on the most crucial question of all they were prepared to do nothing.

Lord Cecil registered an emphatic protest in the Commission. He said that it was now obvious, by the French refusal to limit trained reserves, that they did not mean to do anything to help disarmament. He had tried his best and he had failed. He accordingly made a reservation upon the whole question of trained reserves, which he would bring up again on the second reading. He was supported in this by Mr. Gibson, of the United States delegation, and by Count Bernstorff, who made some extremely effective and acid speeches on the subject.

The French had a number of other proposals for dealing with effectives, but these were only palliatives. They were prepared in principle to limit the period of service and also the number of officers and long-service N.C.O.s and men in the army. These might be important points, as a large number of long-service soldiers obviously stiffen the hastily-trained conscripts. It was significant, however, that the French had a larger proportion of them than any other army. Equally, a drastic reduction in the period of service would place all armies on a militia

basis and reduce their offensive capacity to a vanishing point. This would be real disarmament. But everything turned on the figures in both cases. The Preparatory Commission was only discussing methods. The crucial point would come at the Conference itself, when the blanks had to be filled in. I strongly suspected that France and her friends did not mean business.

Another big question which was the cause of an acute struggle between the French and most of the small States on one side, and ourselves, the Americans, the Italians, the Japanese and the Germans on the other, was the question of international supervision of the execution of the Disarmament Convention. Here the French may have been in the right and we appeared somewhat at a disadvantage. It was common ground between all delegations that in a Convention of this kind some supervision would be necessary. It was impossible to rely entirely upon good faith in what was a matter of life and death to the nations concerned, particularly in view of the tension existing in certain parts of Europe. Our attitude, and that of the States who sided with us, was that there should be a Permanent Disarmament Commission to watch over the Convention, to receive and scrutinise documents and returns, and to investigate complaints and call for explanations. So far we were all at one with the French and the majority of the Commission. Where we parted company was when we would not agree to an obligation to accept investigation in the territory of the accused party without its consent.

For nine years the debate continued and towards the close of the Conference we finally capitulated in principle, though continuing to stand out for certain safeguards, which were never discussed. The opposing case ran somewhat as follows: It was quite impossible to allow

a Committee of foreign experts to have a roving commission to enter our arsenals, munition factories, magazines, and so on, to call for documents from the departments and to inspect the books of munition firms. Charges necessitating visits might be trumped up and the most secret details about mobilisation, reserves of material or processes in manufacture, might be revealed. There are, in fact, places in factories belonging to British armament firms in which our own officers are not allowed to set foot, owing to the jealousy with which certain trade secrets are guarded. It was idle to say that the committees would not do all these things. Unless it was to be a farce, they must have the right of entry to all military establishments. I can quite understand at this point that many readers will say, "It is just this secrecy that has to be broken down, if any disarmament is to be secured." I think that the need of secrecy is very much exaggerated and that it could be confined to a few essentials. But so long as national armaments exist General Staffs will press that their countries should benefit by any special inventions that they possess. Moreover, as we had good reason to know, secrecy will screen weakness as well as strength.

The French, voicing the greater part of the Commission, declared that no Convention was worth anything without this right of investigation on the spot. All kinds of illicit manufacture might be going on, which might place a neighbouring country in deadly peril, if some means were not provided for discovering it. On this question, except for one period which I shall describe in its proper place, the French never wavered. Indeed, during the Conference itself, as will be seen, their demands for meticulous inspection grew more and more extravagant as the German menace increased. If they had been

accepted, not a single bolt or screw could have been driven home nor a gun cast without the presence of an investigating officer who was to be supplied with information as to where all manufactures were taking place and was to be accorded unquestioned right of entry. The truth was that, much as the French disliked the idea of their own establishments being inspected, they were prepared to swallow all this in order to have similar rights of investigation in Germany. They felt that they would not transgress the Convention and would so avoid complaints; while they would gamble on preventing by some means or another their most important secrets being probed: whereas they believed that Germany would not abide by her undertaking and that she could thus be brought to justice before illegal armaments had gone far enough to be a danger. As appears frequently in this book, Germany is ever present in the official French mind, and every move on the international chess-board is taken directly or indirectly with an eye upon possible repercussions there.

We did not come very well out of the whole discussion and Lord Cecil, of course, hated having to defend the Government attitude. Apart from any official views I have had to present as War Office representative, I have tried to think the problem out for myself and have come to the conclusion that it would never be very effective. In the most dangerous aspect of warfare, the use of gas, inspection would be useless, for no investigation can supervise the chemist in his laboratory. The experience of control in Germany, when the Commission was armed with far greater powers than an ordinary investigating body could ever be given, shows that secret arms manufacture can exist on a considerable scale. Complete surprise is impossible, as some warning of proposed

visits must be given and processes and weapons would be camouflaged or removed long before the Committee could see them. In the early post-war Germany much information of secret armaments was obtained from social democratic workmen; but informers would receive a short shrift in totalitarian States and that avenue is definitely closed.

I am inclined to think that it would produce a great deal of international friction without much practical result, unless the investigating commissions were armed with far greater powers than the Inter-Allied Commissions of Control had or even than our civil police possess. Is this really feasible in the world as it is to-day? I believe that far more effective control can be exercised through budgetary expenditure and experts say that this is possible. Money is the key to increased armaments and a careful scrutiny of any upward trend would justify a demand for explanations.

On the question of the limitation of land war material the British draft had nothing to say: it was, indeed, hopelessly inadequate. The French proposed that there should be a general limitation of military budgets and within this a specific limitation of money spent on war material. There are, of course, considerable opportunities for camouflage in the latter proposal, as it is not difficult to transfer money to other votes and it would only deal with annual expenditure. The Germans proposed direct limitation of material, that is, to specify the number of heavy guns, field-guns, machine-guns and so on, to be permitted to each State. The French disliked this because it would mean the disclosure of what they actually possessed including reserves, which reached a colossal figure, and for that reason preferred the alternative of budgetary limitation. We rejected all

three methods and could hardly escape the criticism that we were leaving material unlimited. Personally I was always in favour of Budgetary limitation and eventually the War Office adopted the same view. But what proved almost the last straw for Lord Cecil was the ludicrously inadequate proposals for limitation of air material, in complete contrast to the comprehensive and well-thought-out French ones. Faced with the thinly-veiled contempt of the rest of the Commission, he had no alternative but to say that he would ask for fresh instructions from his Government. He did so in a series of biting messages, not obscurely hinting at resignation if some substantial advance was not made.

I felt deeply for him in the difficult position in which he was placed. Standing with one leg in Whitehall and another in Geneva, I could see how arguments or proposals which passed muster in a brief discussion in the Cabinet were singularly unconvincing to an international commission which knew the subject and was suspicious of our attitude. One of my constant difficulties was to try to interpret Geneva to Whitehall and *vice versa* without, on the one hand, losing the confidence of the War Office and on the other appearing as a stupid die-hard, trying to bolster up impossible proposals. Lord Cecil was deeply in earnest about disarmament and about the League. He was convinced that leadership from our country was essential and that, if disarmament failed, the League would be in jeopardy. He had been unable to convince the Cabinet at that stage of the importance of the question, either on its merits or in its political repercussions both internationally and at home. He had also to carry the burden of the whole problem without much assistance from his Cabinet colleagues. There was another side to the picture. The Services had been

financially starved by both political parties owing to the diversion of all available money to social reform. If certain proposals put forward by other nations at Geneva would seriously injure our own modest forces, it was rather too much to demand acceptance of them in order that we could make a good show at Geneva. We alone had disarmed and further contributions ought not to have been expected from us. It was for the Cabinet to decide upon the political repercussions of a negative attitude, but they were much too busy at that stage really to consider the issues at stake. And so things drifted.

To wind up the story of this meeting of the Preparatory Commission I must refer to naval armaments. Our own naval proposals, which had been carefully worked out, were that limitation should be by categories of ships in terms of tonnage. That is to say, each State should be allotted so much tonnage for battleships, so much for cruisers and so on. This seemed to be a perfectly reasonable method. But the French and their numerous friends had quite different ideas. They insisted that limitation should be by total tonnage and within that figure full liberty should exist to use it in whatever category was desired. This also met the enthusiastic support of other small States. The U.S.A. and Japan supported our views.

The French plan to the lay mind seemed unfair, as state A might build hundreds of submarines, while state B was concentrating on battleships and cruisers. There could be no possibility of getting any ratio between States so long as there was no control over the type of ship built. Eventually the French produced what they called a compromise. This purported to accept categories within a total tonnage, but gave liberty to transfer

tonnage between the categories if other States were notified of the amount transferred. The difference between the two systems was not considerable and a deadlock on this, as on a number of other questions, was reached. At the time there was complete identity of views between ourselves and the U.S.A. Encouraged by this, the Three-Power Naval Conference met at Geneva later on in the year, on the invitation of President Coolidge, with a view to fixing tonnage limits between ourselves, the Americans, and Japan. There broke out an unfortunate controversy between the Americans and ourselves upon the cruiser question, which we unexpectedly proposed should be divided into two classes. I do not desire to go into that particular controversy, as I was not present. I will confine myself to saying that Lord Cecil's long-threatened resignation became an accomplished fact and that he wrote a letter to the Prime Minister, which was published, laying the blame for the failure to secure agreement upon the Admiralty. He thus left the scene of his labours, but was destined to return again as a representative of the Labour Government in 1929 and 1930. Lord Cecil's action was, of course, very damaging to the Government, and it convinced American public opinion, which had been quite ready to blame their own people, that the fault was entirely ours. It was during this Conference that the famous Shearer case occurred. This individual, as representative of American armament interests, appeared in the lobbies and was alleged to have done his best to influence the American Press to prevent agreement. The whole incident was investigated by a Committee of the Senate and created much feeling.

After a month's work the Preparatory Commission had succeeded in producing a document described as the

first reading of a draft Convention. It contained a number of agreed articles, as well as others with two or more parallel columns containing alternative texts. It also bristled with reservations on almost every article. It was at any rate a beginning; but it was certain that before a second reading could be taken a good deal of negotiation and compromise would be necessary.

In the account I have given of this session I have not spared either the French or ourselves. We had made great mistakes, but I formed the impression at the time, which subsequent events confirmed, that the French did not really mean to carry out any disarmament at all. Except for a brief period during the Conference when M. Daladier and M. Pierre Cot were in charge, their intentions were only too clear. M. Paul-Boncour was certainly sincere and worked hard for some result, but the pressure of the French General Staff upon the Government was too strong. It always appeared that our two delegations were in opposition. This was unfortunate, as we had no desire to appear constantly in the camp of the Russians and Germans, when our political relations with the French were cordial. It only shows, however, the extraordinary clash of national temperaments. Even when we were of the same mind it was very difficult for the Latin and the Anglo-Saxon to agree, because they approached problems in an entirely different way.

The end of the first reading saw ourselves and the French at sixes and sevens, the Germans making a reservation on the whole draft, the Italians and the Japanese obscure and unhelpful, the Americans suspicious about naval disarmament and Soviet Russia absent. As it was the Great Powers that would have to do the disarming, and we were still only discussing methods and not actual

figures, the future of disarmament was by no means hopeful. I was quite unable to share Lord Cecil's optimism, when he declared on his return home that the general principles of land disarmament were not seriously in dispute. He always appeared to belong to the school whose motto is, "drive things along, keep them moving, never mind about opposition, it will be all right on the night." The genuine desire to disarm only existed among the small Powers, who would naturally rejoice to see their own armaments become relatively more considerable, as those of their big brothers were reduced. Of a real desire to achieve disarmament for its own sake I could see no sign anywhere. Yet the reason was not because nations welcomed budgetary deficits and excessive taxation but because they were afraid.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE COUNCIL AT WORK

Fireworks by M. Litvinoff. Security. The League in 1928. The Council settles disputes. Sir Austen Chamberlain. The Anglo-French Naval Compromise.

THE Preparatory Commission held a short formal session (its fourth) in December, 1927, in order to set up an Arbitration and Security Committee. The object of this new creation was primarily to make the public think that something was going on and to conceal the complete deadlock which had arisen on nearly all the major questions before the Preparatory Commission, including the failure of the Three-Power Naval Conference. Although it had previously been decided by the Assembly that disarmament was now ripe for discussion upon the security then existing, it was too good an opportunity for the French to lose for pressing forward once more with their favourite panacea. Count Bernstorff was deeply suspicious of this move, as he believed it to be an attempt to shelve disarmament altogether and he spoke against it in the Assembly. Eventually at the fifth session he proposed a resolution that the Disarmament Conference should meet without any further delay. It was a tactical move intended to show up the supposed dilatoriness of the other Powers; his only supporter was M. Litvinoff. But in truth there was nothing else to do except to confess failure and that is entirely contrary to Geneva ideas. The familiar figures of MM. Benes and Politis appeared like magic and the destinies of the new Committee were entrusted to them, the one being appointed President and the other Rapporteur. The two had fought hard for "security," as understood in French

and Little Entente circles, in the Protocol discussions, and they were to continue with the greatest pertinacity and unfailing resource to try to rivet it on the necks of a large number of unwilling Governments throughout the Disarmament discussions.

The career of M. Benes is well known. He was the right hand of President Masaryk all through the struggle for Czech freedom and, after it had been gained, he guided his country's fortunes for many years as Foreign Minister. Ultimately he succeeded Masaryk in the Presidency in the autumn of 1935. He had never been a party politician and preferred to consider himself as a permanent official. He is a man of inexhaustible energy and great persuasive powers. Many a time have I seen him in a drafting Committee confronted by two delegates who are hopelessly at variance. M. Benes was superb on these occasions. He would keep on trying them with formula after formula and would say "*Vraiment nous sommes d'accord.*" By degrees he would produce one which in some extraordinary way appeared to cover the two points of view, although the two disputants were still poles apart. It is always a very clever performance but, sadly enough, it represents so much of the life of Geneva—a pretence of agreement where none in fact exists. To the average man like myself it was a great intellectual treat to see a small drafting Committee composed of first-class brains such as M. Benes, M. Politis, Lord Cecil, M. Massigli, the French Foreign Office expert, and others. The lightning exchanges, the thinking about three moves ahead, the intense awareness and the conciliatory spirit were all a revelation to me.

M. Benes was sincere, I think, in his belief in all these paper safeguards of "security" which he loved to pile up, and in his devotion to the League, but he could hardly

have been unmindful of its value to himself in building up an international reputation. He was unfortunately too much under the thumb of the French. He believed in keeping fit, for he had been in his youth an international footballer, and used to play tennis before breakfast, while devoting the rest of his waking hours to work. He was perhaps too clever to inspire universal confidence, but he worked hard for peace and personally was a genial, kindly man whom everybody liked.

M. Politis and M. Benes used to run in couples. The former was a Greek jurist of international reputation. During the war he joined M. Venizelos, after some hesitation, when he raised the standard of a National Government at Salonika in opposition to King Constantine, and M. Politis became Minister of War. But it was hardly his line. He was more at home as Minister in Paris or Professor at the Sorbonne and he used to alternate between the two posts as the Venizelists were the Government or the Opposition. At one time he even assumed French nationality. He is by profession and inclination a jurist and his power of exposition of a complicated legal question is of a very high order. He is small like his friend Benes but dark, with blue eyes and an attractive, husky voice. Like Benes also he is much under French influence and is frequently used by them to promote their views on security. Were he to confine himself to purely legal questions his reputation would stand very high, but his incursions into the politico-juridical field are less successful.

The great event, however, was the arrival of the Soviet delegation headed by M. Litvinoff and M. Lunarchavsky, now that the dispute with the Swiss Government had been patched up. Although the session was to be a formal one eighteen Bolsheviks arrived, all of them

conspicuous by a curious unhealthy pallor which only disappeared on subsequent occasions after they had enjoyed good Swiss food. They were closely guarded in the League buildings and every one entering was carefully scrutinised. The same precautions were taken in their hotel, which had been compelled by the Geneva city authorities to take them in, after all the hotels had refused. M. Litvinoff was accompanied by his wife, a pleasant, cultured, English lady, the daughter of a Professor of London University. It was an extraordinary coincidence to learn from her lips that, as a child, she had sat on Lord Cushendun's knee, who had now arrived as British representative to replace Lord Cecil.

Great curiosity existed as to the attitude which M. Litvinoff was likely to take up in view of the constant insults that Soviet propaganda had heaped on the League. He took the opportunity of immediately delivering a long speech full of abuse of the capitalist governments and held up the League to ridicule and contempt. To tell the truth, it was not difficult to find material for the purpose in the antics of the Preparatory Commission, with which M. Litvinoff made ample play. The delegates remained meekly silent during this castigation and no attempt was made at the time to answer it.

M. Litvinoff is always an interesting study. In appearance he is not unlike a diminutive Pickwick, stout and spectacled, with a genial smile. He has an immense sense of humour that never deserts him and though he gives many hard knocks, he stands up well to punishment and never resents a counter-offensive. He had learnt English during his political exile but speaks it indifferently, though it comes easier to him than French. He had lived in Whitechapel for years, where he had, I believe, worked as a tailor, and his political views had caused him during

the War to see the inside of an English gaol. After the Bolshevik Revolution he had been exchanged for Bruce Lockhart, author of *British Agent*, who was then detained by the Soviet Government. The rôle that M. Litvinoff seemed to have cast for himself in the early days of his appearances at Geneva was that of a knock-about comedian, whose business it was to show up the hollowness of the League and the hypocrisy of the capitalist Powers towards disarmament. He was certainly extremely entertaining and exposed many shams, but it may be questioned whether the propaganda—which was of course his main object—had any effect in other countries. It was perhaps not entirely a disaster that the brutal and unpalatable truth should occasionally be heard where polite phrases conceal ugly facts, where formulæ are used to plaster over fundamental differences and where the true reasons in favour of a course of action are rarely stated. The Soviet delegation was almost without friends in the early days and the German and Turkish delegations were the only ones that fraternised with them. How changed is the situation to-day! It is not surprising that M. Litvinoff was suspicious that they would not receive the treatment due to a Great Power or that the procedure would be twisted to their disadvantage. He did in fact at times get a good deal less than fair play from some League chairmen, yet he remained correct in his attitude and courteous in debate. He is certainly a shrewd and resourceful man and, as time went on, he mellowed noticeably and gave up the motley wear of the clown. One does not know how far he was acting in accordance with his instructions and to what extent he personally approved of the earlier rôle that he assumed. As the Japanese and German dangers to Russia increased he began to see that the League was

worth while and might help his country through a dangerous period. This culminated in the Bolsheviks joining the League they had so fiercely abused and M. Litvinoff made a model speech on the occasion of their entry. Whatever his earlier extravagances may have been I came to the somewhat grudging conclusion that, while much of this attitude may have been bluff, he was genuinely devoted to peace, at any rate during the phase through which the world was then passing. He never made a speech in the Council or the Assembly that did not breathe the correct League spirit. It is no fault of his that the Soviet Government use him for window-dressing purposes at Geneva while they continue to run an entirely separate foreign policy in Moscow. He was certainly kept in ignorance of a number of decisions that were taken there and his advice was frequently ignored.

One cannot forget, however, that the Soviet Government, while reducing the *tempo*, are still preaching world revolution and the destruction of capitalism as their ultimate aim, nor have they ever repudiated the view of Lenin that there is no obligation to keep faith with a capitalist state. For the time being it is their interest to keep the peace and we ought not to refuse co-operation to that end. To what extent they can be relied upon to afford armed assistance to a fellow member of the League against an aggressor is a matter of speculation.

M. Lunarchavsky, the Commissar for Education and the second Soviet delegate, was a sad-looking Jew, obviously in indifferent health, with a long hatchet face and pince-nez, reddish hair and beard and slouching walk: the sort of figure one might see in the reading-room of the British Museum or in a second-hand book-shop in Charing Cross Road. He was accompanied by a beautiful and elegant wife with most remarkable

pearls and other jewellery, whether real or not I cannot say. She was reputed to be a German film star. Later on, when the two Ministers stayed a few days in Berlin, she attracted a great deal of publicity and her "make up," her expensive clothes and jewels were so incompatible with the austere standards then in vogue for the wife of a Commissar that he fell into disfavour and was relieved of his office. There were rumours that he had played a bloodthirsty part in the Revolution, the truth of which I cannot vouch for. It was at least to his credit that as Commissar for Education since the Revolution he had kept together the priceless Imperial collections and libraries as well as the public museums. He had also insisted on the retention of the Czarist curators who alone were capable of caring for these works of art. Moreover he fostered music and the drama and, whatever were the miseries of the people under the Bolshevik régime, the arts were not denied to them. He was never a conspicuous figure at Geneva. During the Disarmament Conference he was appointed Soviet Ambassador to Spain but died of cancer at Mentone without ever taking up his office.

This brief session was also noticeable for the appearance of Lord Cushendun, better known as Mr. Ronald McNeill, as British representative. He had succeeded to Lord Cecil's Ministerial office as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and also took over his rôle of disarmament representative. The Geneva papers had reminded the public of his famous exploit of throwing a book at Mr. Winston Churchill, during the Home Rule debates in the House of Commons, which had stimulated interest in him. He was handsome and impressive in appearance with a fine head and white hair. He stood 6 foot 5 inches and complained bitterly of his uncomfortable night in the *wagon-lits*, in which he had not been able to lie down!

However raffish his political youth may have been, he was extremely dignified and conciliatory. He knew his subject, and was a good debater. As an old Parliamentary hand, the laxity of control and the irrelevancy in discussion permitted by the Chairman shocked him profoundly and he would frequently intervene to get some sort of order in the debates. The foreigners liked him because they saw in him what they believed to be the typical British statesman. He was an Ulster Tory and was no doubt of the die-hard school in politics; but he was a man of too wide a culture to be hide-bound. He soon became susceptible to Geneva influences. When he first came out he remarked that what the Admiralty said was good enough for him and he did not think the time would ever come when he would fail to back up their views. It was interesting to watch his metamorphosis. As time went and he heard the other side, he became a severe critic of the more extreme pretensions of some of the Service departments. He had become embarrassed, as Lord Cecil had been, by the prospect of having to defend at Geneva proposals so blatantly to our advantage and he did not hesitate to force the issue in the Cabinet. He signed the Kellogg Pact on behalf of Great Britain in August, 1928, in the absence of Sir Austen Chamberlain through illness, and it made a deep impression upon him. He came on to Geneva, made an eloquent speech at the Assembly and, in alluding to the Pact, he referred to the new era that had dawned and that "war would no longer be a gallant adventure but a national dishonour." He acted as Foreign Minister for some months during Sir Austen Chamberlain's convalescence, to his own great satisfaction. He was a man of sedentary habits and passed a large amount of his time on a sofa. He seemed to find the propulsion of his huge frame too much for his

heart and muscles. He took, however, a kind of vicarious exercise by employing a masseur daily to keep them supple. After the fall of the Baldwin Government in 1929 he dropped out of political life and was able to enjoy his rhododendrons at Cushendun in Ulster in the spring, a relaxation which public duty had for so many years made impossible.

The meeting of the Preparatory Commission only lasted three days but the fifth session opened three months later in March, 1928. The first business was the consideration of the new Soviet proposals for complete disarmament. They were introduced by M. Litvinoff in another speech of great length, full of vituperation of the League, of the Preparatory Commission and of the capitalist States. He claimed that Soviet Russia was the only Power that had really worked for disarmament. He proceeded to give an exposition of the Soviet plan, which was to be a Convention for immediate, complete and general disarmament. It involved the disbandment of all land, sea, and air forces; the destruction of all weapons and military supplies; the scrapping of all warships and military aeroplanes; the destruction of all fortresses, naval and air bases, military plants and factories; the abolition of military, naval and air ministries; the prohibition of any treatises on military training or of any military history in historical works. All this was to be done within a period of four years. M. Litvinoff had also circulated a document in which he calculated that the various organs of the League, which he specified, had devoted no less than 189 sessions to the study of disarmament and that the only result so far had been as follows:—

Arms Traffic Convention, 1925—Ratified only by France. Accession only by Liberia.

Gas Protocol, 1925.—Ratified by Venezuela, France and the U.S.S.R.
Complete and General Disarmament.—No real result.
Reduction of Military Budgets.—No real result.
Reduction of Naval Armaments.—No real result.
Reduction of the Manufacture of Arms.—No real result.

It was all rather good fun, though the details were quite incorrect.

There is no need for me to scrutinise the disarmament proposals very closely, for I am convinced that no one would have been more embarrassed than M. Litvinoff himself if they had been accepted. They were frankly propaganda and, in a way, rather effective. For the legend survives to this day in some political discussions how the Soviet Government offered complete disarmament to the League and it was rejected.

The next meeting was postponed till the following afternoon. The whole of the morning was occupied by delegates running round the various hotels, trying to get some one to answer M. Litvinoff's speech. They were all furious but lacked the courage to take the lead. Our relations with Russia were particularly bad at the time and Lord Cushendun refused to make the first speech, although he was quite ready to speak later on. The lobbying became absolutely frantic in the early afternoon, but Lord Cushendun lay quietly on his sofa dictating his own speech and refused to alter his decision. When we arrived at the meeting delegates were tearing their hair and fearing that there would be no reply at all, but the Italian delegate, General de Marinis, was found in his place quietly running over his notes. He had been quite apart from the swirl of the discussion, for he intervened

very seldom and nobody had thought of him. When the time came he got up and made a short speech, which left the way open for Lord Cushendun. The speech he made is still treasured in the annals of the League. He took up point after point of M. Litvinoff's proposal and proceeded to demolish them. "For seven years," he said, "the League of Nations through its Commissions had been working for peace. There had been no assistance or encouragement from the U.S.S.R., which had lost no opportunity of overwhelming the League with scorn and derision. Their main object was to wreck it and the Soviet Government's policy was the greatest obstacle to carrying out the scheme." He turned then to M. Litvinoff's professed desire to abolish war. "There were two kinds of war," he said, "international and civil. The whole basis of the Soviet policy has been to produce armed insurrections in other countries. Before we proceed further we should receive some assurance that they have abandoned this idea."

He analysed the proposal that countries should retain armed police in proportion to the length of their railway communications. He recalled that Russia's stretched from the Polish frontier to the Behring Sea and thus would give her the most powerful army in Europe. If all nations accepted the Convention to-morrow, States would be at the mercy of those that could improvise armed forces most quickly and they would inevitably be the big industrial nations. The security of the small Powers would thus be less than it ever was.

When he finally sat down, after speaking well over an hour, the whole Commission burst into applause lasting for several minutes. The demonstration was at least as much against the Soviet Government as an appreciation

of the speech. They were hated and ostracised then to a degree which now seems fantastic. Count Bernstorff was the only delegate to give a guarded approval to the plan. Some of the German Delegation, nominally allies of the Soviet, came over and wrung our hands vigorously, thanking God for England and Lord Cushendun!

M. Litvinoff's main object was to try to secure a vote against his disarmament proposal and to proclaim to the world that no capitalist country would have it. The political delegates were quite competent to deal with this manœuvre and passed a resolution affirming their interest in the proposal, but that it was unacceptable as a basis of their work, which must proceed on the lines laid down.

M. Litvinoff in his final reply to the many criticisms dealt trenchantly with Lord Cushendun and counter-attacked with many instances of Great Britain's high-handedness with and contempt for the rights of weaker nations, giving examples in Persia, China, Egypt and Ireland. It was a good fighting speech, if not entirely relevant, and I think Lord Cushendun had the best of the argument. After the rejection of the plan M. Litvinoff proceeded to say that he could produce another draft convention out of his hat, dealing this time with proportional disarmament. It was reserved for the next session. Meantime the Arbitration and Security Committee, consisting of the same personnel as the Preparatory Commission, though without the non-League States, had been very busy. Three sessions were held between December, 1927, and July, 1928, and a whole crop of Model Treaties, both general and bilateral, were the result. It spoke volumes for the industry of MM. Benes, Politis, Rutgers and others, but the treaties have not added anything material to any one's security, nor

have they been extensively made use of. The most significant feature was the continual drive towards tightening the obligations under the Covenant. A weighty British memorandum was circulated criticising some of the proposals made by the Rapporteur, dealing with a majority vote on the Council and the definition of the aggressor. They cut at the root of the principle of unanimity and members might be bound by decisions against which they had recorded a definite vote. The proposal to try to define an aggressor as the party that refused an armistice proposed by the Council also came in for severe criticism. It is not my purpose to enter into details of these somewhat complicated juridical questions which are perhaps of little interest to the average reader, though I shall recur to "security" in a later chapter. It is sufficient to note a further stage in the long struggle between two entirely differing conceptions of the League, which centre round the need for unanimity on the Council as opposed to a majority decision, before any action can be taken.

When the Assembly considered the mass of Model Conventions before them, M. Politis at the end of the session succeeded in getting three of them, dealing with the pacific settlement of international disputes, converted into one General Act, to which adhesion was invited. Only twenty-two States have signed it, most of them with substantial reservations which have rendered it largely ineffective. To the layman the oddest part of the Act was the complete disappearance from the international stage of the Council as a mediatory body and the substitution of a Conciliation Commission for the settlement of disputes. Our own Labour Government, in spite of the legal advice tendered to them, insisted upon signing it, as a gesture of a "forward" League

policy when they took office the following year. It is fortunately a dead letter.

During all this period in which I have been describing the work of disarmament, international life at Geneva continued with unabated interest. It was the peak of the League's prestige and usefulness. M. Briand, Herr Stresemann and Sir Austen Chamberlain regularly attended all meetings of the Council and they worked together in considerable harmony. Herr Stresemann regarded himself as the protector of Austria and Hungary, when they got into trouble, and M. Briand usually championed the other side. Sir Austen was always there to hold the balance true and he exercised his functions with supreme tact. There were influences then at work to draw France and Germany together and M. Loucheur was very active on the French side. He looked like a prize-fighter with his flat face and broken nose but was in fact a far-seeing industrialist who had worked with Herr Rathenau, until he was assassinated, for a commercial rapprochement between the countries, and again tried his hand under the guidance of Briand. But the fundamental causes of friction remained. There could never be real peace between the two countries while France insisted on the *status quo* and Germany refused to accept permanent inferiority. Nevertheless the *modus vivendi* established by Locarno was working as a temporary measure under the watchful eye of one of its chief architects, Sir Austen Chamberlain. The Big Three indeed controlled the Council, much to the annoyance of the smaller Powers. If they were in agreement, all was well and the League went forward; if they were not, it stood still. I have not mentioned the Italian delegate, Signor Scialoja. He was a jurist of considerable repute and had held the post since the League was founded until

he died. He never joined the Fascist Party but Mussolini retained him. Not being a Minister he intervened seldom and had to submit all important questions to Rome, but he did much useful work on the Council and on juridical questions in particular he was heard with considerable respect.

The Council was concerned with a number of disputes. On January 1st, 1928, at the Szent-Gotthard railway station on the Hungarian side of the Austro-Hungarian frontier, where the joint Customs examination takes place, five wagons containing machine gun parts were discovered by the Austrian Customs officials. The way-bill had a false declaration that they contained machinery and showed that they were consigned from a firm in Verona to a station on the Hungarian-Czechoslovak frontier. They had passed through Austria in transit to Hungary: under the Peace Treaties neither of these States was permitted to import arms. With some hardihood, as the statement was unsupported by any evidence, the Hungarian Government announced that they were consigned to Poland. This the Poles indignantly denied and pointed out that the direct route from Verona to Poland did not lie through Szent-Gotthard. Italy professed to know nothing about them and the mystery deepened.

Naturally the Little Entente were at once in full cry and demanded that an investigation should take place in Hungary in accordance with the provisions which were identical in all the Peace Treaties. No one had any real doubt that it was part of a series of consignments of illicit war material from Italy to Hungary, which was a flagrant breach of the Treaty of Trianon on the part of both States. The question was how to obtain proof and whether the Council would unanimously face up to the

complicity of a Great Power in breaking the Treaty. The Hungarian Government blandly announced that the material had been confiscated and in accordance with their Customs regulations would be sold by auction within fourteen days. Prior to the meeting of the Council, the acting President, M. Tcheng-Loh (China), who had no desire to put his finger into this hornets' nest, sent a polite telegram, at the instigation of the Secretary General, to the Hungarian Government suggesting that "they should suspend this action, as the matter was shortly to be considered by the Council." The Hungarian Government replied that, as the matter was now in the hands of the competent judicial authorities, postponement was impossible, but as "a matter of personal courtesy to the President of the Council" they would "ask the purchasers not to remove their purchase."

When the Council met there was a fierce struggle behind the scenes. France, as always, stepped forward to fight the battles of the Little Entente, though in truth the voluble and tempestuous M. Titulescu had no need of a champion. Germany backed Hungary not only because fate had thrown them together in common opposition to the *status quo* but even more because she was determined to resist the precedent of the appointment of a League Commission of investigation in any of the ex-enemy countries. The stakes on both sides were considerable and in the end Germany won. The usual weak compromise was agreed upon that a Committee of the Council should study the documents and make a report at the June session. It did its best and sent two small-arms experts to examine the consignment and two railway experts to examine the railway and Customs procedure at Szent-Gotthard. The former established

the fact that the consignment represented 625 machine guns of the type in use in the Austro-Hungarian Army during the War. They had been surrendered to the Italians and reconditioned. The report was a somewhat weak one, concluding with the statement that "the final destination of the material is not apparent from the information which the Committee has been able to obtain, acting within the limits of its powers. On the other hand, the information furnishes no evidence that this material was intended to remain in Hungarian territory."

A battle royal ensued on this in the Council. The Germans and the Hungarians chuckled while the French and the Little Entente were furious. Sir Austen Chamberlain summed up the matter by saying that the result of the procedure adopted by the Council satisfied no one and that another time more efficacious means must be sought. The truth was known to every one in the room that Italy and Hungary were the culprits and every General Staff in Europe was aware that the smuggling had been going on for some time. The incident was closed by a resolution which failed to blame Hungary except for minor indiscretions, did not mention Italy, and somewhat feebly asserted that the right of the Council to order an investigation according to the Peace Treaties remained intact, whereas it had been almost irremediably compromised. The reason why this international incident was ever provoked was amusing. The Hungarians who arranged the smuggling had bribed the Austrian Customs officials to let all such consignments through and the system had worked smoothly. Unfortunately these particular wagons arrived at the frontier station on a Sunday, which was quite unprecedented, and the Sunday staff had not shared in the

bounty distributed to the week-day officials. Consequently they did their duty unflinchingly. It was all comic opera but it had its serious side. I had always had, even in those early days, a suspicion that the whole system of collective security, which looked so formidable on paper, might break down before a determined Great Power who was in the mood to defy it. The flabbiness of the Council on this occasion was only too apparent, when they failed to do their duty and establish the guilt of Italy or even demand an explanation from her or force Germany to agree to the proper procedure. The French saw the danger clearly and M. Paul-Boncour did his utmost to prevent the inaction that was to form a fatal precedent for the tragedies of Manchuria and Abyssinia.

What the considerations were which induced Sir Austen Chamberlain not to take a strong line—and it would have been decisive—I never knew for certain, but I think it probable that he did not desire to embroil Italy, which an official investigation could not fail to have done. His policy was slowly to coax Italy into the position of being a good partner in the League. Surrender to truculent States at Geneva was usually a failure and created a precedent for even worse behaviour. I could not withhold my admiration for Hungary in this and subsequent disputes before the Council, in which they became involved. They were always so stiff-necked and tenacious: they did not adopt the deferential and hypocritical attitude of some Powers in similar positions but fought their battles to the last, admitting nothing and defying everybody. In the end they generally managed to obtain a grudging admission that there was something in their case.

They were also involved in what was called the Hungarian Optants case. This had dragged on before

the Council since 1923 but suddenly became dramatic at every session of the Council from October, 1927, till September, 1928. It was a somewhat complicated story which I will not attempt to tell in detail. When Transylvania passed from Hungary to Roumania as the result of the War, Hungarian subjects were allowed to opt for Hungarian nationality and under the Treaty of Trianon could not be dispossessed of their land on that account by Roumania. A Mixed Arbitral Tribunal consisting of neutral as well as Roumanian and Hungarian judges was appointed, to which appeals could be made arising out of this provision. After the War Roumania, in order to stave off an agrarian revolution, passed a law expropriating the landlords and giving the peasants the ownership of the land on certain terms. This act was naturally applied to the Hungarian optants as well as to Roumanian subjects. The Government contended that the optants had no special privileges and could not be exempt from a law which was to apply to all owners of land without distinction. After some forcible expropriations had been made, the optants, backed by Hungary, appealed to the Mixed Arbitral Tribunal on the ground that they were exempted by the Treaty. Roumania's reply to this was to withdraw her judge from the Tribunal and so prevent a quorum being formed, which debarred the Tribunal from sitting at all. The Hungarian Government accordingly appealed to the Council under Article 11 of the Covenant. The ramifications of the case were extraordinary and, as I used to read the wealth of documents of each side, I was alternately convinced that each of them was right.

The real interest of the case, which crammed the Council room to suffocation, was the dramatic manner in which it was conducted by Count Apponyi for

Hungary and M. Titulescu for Roumania. They were European figures. Count Apponyi was a Hungarian magnate, over 80 years of age, who had been in political life in Hungary for more than half a century. He was a good linguist, speaking French, English and German with equal fluency. He was tall and bearded with blue eyes and rosy cheeks and had a splendid bearing, the Grand Old Man of Hungary. He used to make delightful speeches in the Assembly, full of a wistful longing for peace, of sadness over his own country's plight and of advice out of his rich political experience to the Powers who were then shaping the world's destinies. He conducted his case with great skill and in spite of his age managed to make long speeches and replied on the spur of the moment in the discussions that lasted the whole day through.

M. Titulescu, then Minister in London, afterwards Foreign Minister for many years, was at heart a financier and one of the few international figures that his country has produced. He was oriental in appearance and without a hair on his face. He had a mania for warmth, always wore about three overcoats and kept the room in his hotel at a temperature of 80°. He was an extremely agile debater and his words would pour out in a perfect torrent. In private he is a wonderful mimic and I have heard him produce fits of laughter among friends by imitating Sir Austen Chamberlain or other members of the Council in broken English and French. He conducted his case with great astuteness. In the end it dragged on for another two years and was finally settled on a cash basis during the Hague Reparations Conference in August, 1929. Nobody outside the two disputants cared much about the merits of the case but every one enjoyed the display of oratorical fireworks.

The peace of nations was much ruffled during 1928 by what was called the "Anglo-French Naval Compromise." It originated in a discussion on the veranda of the Secretariat between Vice-Admiral Kelly and Commandant de Leuze, the British and French Naval representatives. The French proposal for ending the naval deadlock was sent home and Mr. Bridgeman, then First Lord of the Admiralty, took it in his pocket to a Cabinet meeting and brought it to the notice of his colleagues. The ground was very delicate as the United States were smarting under the failure of the Three-Power Geneva Conference of the previous year and they had Lord Cecil's authority for the fact that it was due to the British Admiralty. The Cabinet ought to have been cautious, but they rushed straight on to their doom. Broadly speaking, the details of the compromise were to leave unlimited practically all classes of naval vessels except those in which the United States was interested. In March M. Briand and Sir Austen Chamberlain discussed the matter in Paris. The Cabinet became further involved when Sir Austen on their behalf volunteered to do a "deal" by withdrawing our opposition to trained reserves (which had been a matter of principle connected with land disarmament), if he could "buy" French complacency to the very method of classification of cruisers upon which the Three-Power Conference had broken down. It was actually more unacceptable to the United States than the British proposal then put forward. The whole business had an unpleasant flavour of opportunism.

On July 30th Sir Austen Chamberlain announced in Parliament the success of the negotiations, which were to be secretly communicated to the interested Powers. He became seriously ill the next day and the singular

ineptitude in the subsequent handling of the matter might have been avoided, had he been still at the helm. The clause relating to the bargain about trained reserves was not communicated to the other Governments and public opinion, not only in the United States but also in Great Britain, Germany and Italy, became much perturbed by the hints of the French Press that the agreement had developed into a military alliance. The Press campaign, based on the leakages in the French Press, began to assume immense proportions in the United States. A more than usually well-inspired disclosure in Paris occurred early in October and the whole pitiful story had then to be published, including the trained reserves bargain, which had not been disclosed. It sealed the fate of the compromise and our Government thoroughly deserved the indignation aroused abroad and the loss of prestige at home, which had an influence on the result of the General Election a few months later. Feeling ran high in Parliamentary debates and Lord Grey was particularly scathing in his condemnation of the action of the Government. The fault was not that they had been unscrupulous, but that they had failed to take disarmament seriously and had allowed the Admiralty to take charge, with the result that the susceptibilities of other Powers, and particularly the United States, had hardly been sufficiently considered. Secrecy, which produced exaggerated rumours in the Press, killed it before it ever saw daylight and the subsequent revelation of the unsavoury bargain with trained reserves called forth universal execration.

The Kellogg Pact or, to give it its official name, the Pact of Paris, was signed on August 27th, 1928. It had a curious origin. M. Briand desired to gain a little cheap prestige for his country and, looking round the world to

find the State with which war was quite impossible, he selected the United States as a suitable co-signatory of a bilateral non-aggression Pact. Mr. Kellogg, the Secretary of State, thought it a pity to deny others a share of this love-feast and, much to M. Briand's embarrassment—for it was the last thing he wanted—proposed that all the more important States including Germany should be invited. Meantime enthusiasm for this great gesture was rising rapidly in the United States and elsewhere. Our Government with an odd frankness accepted it with a reservation as to "certain regions of the world the welfare and integrity of which constitute a special and vital interest for our peace and safety . . . that interference with these regions cannot be suffered." This virtually stultified our signature, as the geographical limits were not specified. No doubt other States noted it as a convenient precedent for them, if engaged in some disreputable proceeding. The Pact condemned war as an instrument of policy and stated that only peaceful means must be used for the settlement of disputes. It provided no machinery for the coercion of the aggressor or even for consultation among the signatories in the case of a dispute arising or a conflict breaking out. In these respects it was merely an emasculated edition of the Covenant. Its chief feature was that it brought the United States back from the isolation into which she had receded and it had a certain value as a solemn and ceremonial renunciation of war by the assembled representatives of a large number of nations. It raised high hopes at the time but events proved that it was insufficient to deter a Power from going to war when its material interests demanded it.

By the end of 1928 Sir Austen Chamberlain's tenure of the appointment of Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs was drawing to a close; the General Election

actually took place in May in the following year. It had been a memorable and fruitful stewardship. He was the first Foreign Secretary to make it a practice to attend every meeting of the Council and the Assembly, and the prestige of the League had been enormously increased thereby. His regular appearance naturally caused nearly all the European States to send their Foreign Ministers or Premiers also. These could speak with real authority and business could be rapidly transacted. Prior to Sir Austen, the Government had frequently been represented by Under Secretaries and even by diplomats. These could naturally speak only from Foreign Office briefs and were unable to take any responsibility. I have always thought that the manner of the League's death, if that calamity should occur, will not be by a dramatic resolution winding it up, but a gradual decay towards inanition caused by States sending diplomats and private individuals to represent them on the Council, when they no longer have any belief in its usefulness as a political body.

The two men during my ten years at Geneva to whom the League owed most were Sir Austen Chamberlain and M. Briand. Their time coincided with its greatest prosperity and this was, in part at any rate, due to these two who served it and the cause of peace so wholeheartedly. Sir Austen's personal prestige at Geneva was very great. He had a very definite conception of the powers and limitations of the League and spoke out strongly if he thought that they were being exceeded. He gave to foreigners the impression of coldness and pomposity: certainly his Assembly speeches were not very exhilarating affairs; but in personal relations he was genial, patient and courteous. He gained his strength from the knowledge that they all knew him to be straightforward and fair. He was certainly one of the most

successful of our Foreign Secretaries at Geneva. Perhaps the best speech was one in 1927, when he found it necessary to nip in the bud a sort of conspiracy among some of the smaller Powers to resurrect the Protocol. He reminded the Assembly of our million dead, whose graves lay in the ocean and beneath the soil of three continents, which were the price we were prepared to pay in fulfilment of a guarantee, but this could not be universal: "Not even for this great League of Nations will I risk the disruption of that smaller, but older League, the British Empire." I sometimes wonder whether the history of the world would have been different if he, with his determination and his self-confidence, had been Foreign Secretary at the time of the Manchurian affair. He would certainly have taken a stronger line than did Sir John Simon in the initial stages; and it was the lack of firm League control at the beginning that enabled the military party in Japan to gain the upper hand.

There is no Minister of the Crown, except the Prime Minister, who has to act to such an extent on his own responsibility, without departmental guidance, as the Foreign Secretary. This is no disparagement of the Foreign Office staff; it is the force of circumstances. He is constantly in conversation with foreign Ambassadors and Ministers and at Geneva he may have to express opinions on all kinds of subjects at the shortest notice. The Foreign Office provide him with the latest information on every subject that he is likely to be discussing, but there remain large gaps which from necessity and inclination he must fill in himself. Usually he concentrates on the bigger problems, which he takes largely into his own hands, while leaving the less important ones to be dealt with by the officials. In order to hold his own

he must be extremely industrious, read an immense mass of papers and have a good memory. The other Cabinet Ministers do little or nothing *ex tempore*; they are fortified by the views of their departments and speak from briefs. The greater number of the decisions are departmental ones, though on policy the Minister has the last word, after weighing the alternatives put before him by his Department. The Foreign Office therefore remains unique, as I see it, in the personal demands upon the character and qualities of its Ministerial head.

Sir Austen worked extremely hard and invariably knew his subjects. M. Briand was the opposite. His advisers told me that he would read nothing, not even the concentrated essence of a brief reduced to a few lines and put in his hands two or three minutes before the discussion on the subject opened in the Council. He had one of those wonderful brains that seem to imbibe knowledge from the air. He would sit and listen to the discussion for a little, then turn it over in his mind and finally make a brilliant improvisation as to the policy to be pursued. How he got his facts and where his inspirations came from his advisers never knew. I was discussing him once with my brother, Professor H. W. V. Temperley, who had accompanied Lord Balfour to Geneva for the first two years of the League. He told me that his chief was exactly the same as Briand and that he believed that great intellects are able to perform such *tours de force.* The ways of genius must indeed be trying to the nerves of the departmental advisers!

Sir Austen, if not a genius, was well equipped with knowledge, able, conciliatory and courageous. His part in the post-war settlement was considerable and his name in history will always be associated with Locarno.

That Treaty is now in the dust, but it was a great instrument of appeasement, which under happier circumstances might have proved decisive for preserving the peace in Western Europe. It has been said that its value declined from the moment that it had been signed. This is probably true. It was not so much the content of the Treaty as the atmosphere of goodwill and the desire to forget the past which it brought in its train. Sir Austen's international reputation indeed would have been more secure if he had left the stage with the laurels he had then won. For he was too obviously Francophile for the taste of the British electorate and it was felt that he was too subservient to French policy and to M. Briand. Rightly or wrongly British public opinion had become increasingly anti-French after the War. Recollections of Poincaré-ism, of the Ruhr and of all the pinpricks that were applied to Germany estranged a people who desired to bury the past. Memories by millions of ex-soldiers of the exactions of the keepers of the *estaminets* behind the Front and the false rumour that we were made to pay rent for the trenches were, ridiculous as it may seem, potent factors in keeping the anti-French feeling alive. Perhaps Sir Austen's speech in Paris when he said, "I love France as one loves a woman," was the last straw. An extremely vulgar cartoon in a German comic paper illustrating the embrace was shown by the General Staff to the Secretary of State for War and produced by him at a Cabinet meeting, which caused much amusement there. The Anglo-French Naval Compromise, narrated above, caused genuine anger in the country and illness prevented Sir Austen Chamberlain defending it in Parliament. But it was in fact indefensible. His stock had sunk rather low by the time the General Election arrived and, when he announced that he had the authority

of Mr. Baldwin to say that he would again be Foreign Secretary if they got a majority, it certainly did nothing to increase the number of Conservative votes. In his own constituency, a Chamberlain seat since some time in the "seventies" or "eighties," he only just scraped home. He became First Lord of the Admiralty in the stop-gap National Government in September, 1931, which held office for a few weeks while the General Election was taking place, the Liberals having insisted upon holding the Foreign Office as one of the two key positions in the Cabinet. He handled the difficult and delicate crisis of the mutiny at Invergordon extremely well, on the whole. In the struggle for places in the new Government forming after the victory at the polls, he learnt that there were very strong influences against him and wisely wrote a dignified letter to the Prime Minister, saying that he had no desire for inclusion as he wished to make way for younger men. A similar fate befell Lord Reading, who had apparently done very well during his few weeks at the Foreign Office.

Fortune on the whole had not treated Sir Austen Chamberlain too kindly. His whole life had been a preparation for a Ministerial career though in the early days he owed something to being the son of his father. As time went on he fully justified his Cabinet rank and, despite his natural ambition, his scrupulous sense of loyalty led him to resign office when Secretary of State for India, for failures in the Mesopotamia Campaign which certainly were no fault of his. Again, he walked out with other Conservatives into the wilderness from his loyalty to Mr. Lloyd George, when the Coalition Cabinet fell in 1922. Years before he was within an ace of becoming Conservative leader after Arthur Balfour had resigned, but he withdrew to avoid a contest. It

must have been at least some compensation to this great and patriotic Englishman that he should in the last few years of his life have enjoyed an almost unique position as an Elder Statesman, with a very large following in the country, and as a private member have had an influence far exceeding any that he wielded as a Minister.

CHAPTER FIVE

GENEVA AND THE ASSEMBLY

1929. Amenities at Geneva. British and Dominion Delegations. Outstanding personalities. The Labour Government at the Assembly. The Preparatory Commission for disarmament.

THOUGH work at Geneva was frequently strenuous, there were compensations. For those fond of ski-ing there was plenty of it within an hour and a half of Geneva. It was a wonderful sight to see the greater part of the population, whole families together, trooping to the railway station early on Sunday mornings to get a day's sport, which was within reach of the most modest pockets. They returned late in the evening with sparkling eyes and glowing cheeks to testify to the immense moral and physical benefit of the mountain air and exercise. The winter otherwise was *triste* and cold with the eternal *mer de brouillard*, which hung about 1200 feet above the lake and blotted out the sun. There could be a piercing wind from the north-east called the Bise, which blew down the lake for days together and cut one like a knife, piercing the stoutest clothing. The spring and early summer were delightful and excursions into the mountains of Switzerland or Savoy were a constant source of pleasure. The scenery—the wild flowers and the green mountainsides with their running torrents—helped one to forget a week of stuffy committee-rooms. There were many interesting places within easy motor run, Montreux, Caux, Gruyère, Chamonix, the Rhone Valley, Annecy, Talloires, Belley, the Jura, Mantua and Burgundy. All had their differing charms and their excellent restaurants with the *vin du pays* and their *specialités de la maison*.

On Lac Leman there was plenty of boating and yachting, and bathing plages were full after the snow water had come down from the mountains. At Onex, four miles from the city, a golf club had been laid out, largely as the result of the energy of the Secretariat and the International Labour Office. Here on occasion might be found a galaxy of stars of the political firmament: Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, Sir John Simon, Lord Cecil, Lord Londonderry, the Aga Khan, Mr. Norman Davis, Mr. Hugh Gibson, Sir Eric Drummond—all played regularly when they had time to spare. It is the great refuge of the British, American and Japanese delegations, and members of the Secretariat; there is also a large Swiss contingent. I have seen M. Paul-Boncour there but, remembering the fate of M. Briand's golf at Cannes, no French delegate, I think, ever drove a ball from the tee. It is a fine setting with the magnificent range of the Jura in the distance and the Rhone, running between its steep escarpments, actually forming part of the boundary of the course.

The new part of the city is well laid out with great broad thoroughfares and blocks of houses built in the French style. The old city, built on a hill, still keeps its fortifications and is proud of its long resistance to the attacks of successive Dukes of Savoy. The narrow streets and old buildings grouped round the cathedral are picturesque and, as one strolls through, one instinctively expects to run into a man-at-arms with pike and leather jerkin, as one turns the corner.

There are pleasant walks along the lake-side and plenty of public gardens where the good Swiss bourgeois and family may be seen disporting themselves on summer evenings. The Hotel Beau Rivage, where the British Delegation always stayed in my time, is in a particularly pleasant spot near the water's edge and one could see

Mont Salève in the near distance and, on a clear day, the ever lovely snow-clad Mont Blanc towering in the background. The contour of the mountain is curiously reminiscent of the profile of the recumbent Emperor Napoleon, with his great hat on his head.

The Genevois, though of French extraction, differ notably from them, both in mentality and appearance. They are stouter, more placid and lack the gaiety and fire of the French, who profess to look down upon them. Calvinisim has no doubt exerted its influence upon the temperament of the people. They are home-loving and have not the restaurant habit; consequently the night life of the place is not stimulating, nor are the restaurants in any way remarkable. The best of them are largely dependent upon the League, where conferences, large and small, are almost continuous for nine months in the year.

The Swiss Constitution is a remarkably interesting study and eddies of the passions of a referendum or election, both cantonal and federal, catch one's eye in the Swiss papers from time to time. The constant recurrence of protests against the encroachments of "étatisme" is a reminder of their devotion to the federal idea. Geneva was for centuries an independent canton and only joined the Swiss Confederation in 1813. Yet, notwithstanding the looseness of its constitutional structure, Switzerland has solved the problem of nationality, and the German, French and Italian-speaking cantons live together in amity and are Swiss first of all. In politics feeling may run high but not on racial or religious lines. There is no such thing as a German party or a Catholic party. Happy is the State that has the genius to keep the demon of racial intolerance at arm's length! For many years the Swiss have been represented at the League by M.

life and soul of the place and one felt oneself for a few hours back in England. One met there most of the prominent men and women in the world as they passed through Geneva in a ceaseless stream. Mrs. Barton, always known as the "Queen of Geneva," now, alas, no longer with us, dispensed gracious hospitality in her beautiful Villa Lammermuir on the shore of the lake. She was the grand-daughter of Sir Robert Peel and the widow of a well-known Geneva resident. Here could be seen on a Sunday afternoon countless members of the various delegations, and her frequent dinner and luncheon parties afforded great opportunities for statesmen to get together. It suggested a political salon and Mrs. Barton loved to have it so. She liked to be in the middle of great events and to listen to the talk of the men that mattered.

On one famous occasion she ardently desired to effect a reconciliation between Mr. Arthur Henderson and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald after the Labour split in August, 1931. Feeling had been very bitter. She sent Mr. MacDonald a text from the Bible and finally induced him to promise to shake hands. Half Geneva was asked to witness the event and punctually at four-thirty Arthur Henderson, looking very solemn in a morning coat, arrived on the scene. Half an hour went by, and people began to whisper and all eyes were turned on the door. And then another half-hour, and Mrs. Barton was becoming seriously agitated, and Henderson was looking glum and ill at ease. The tension, as the minutes continued to slip by, became painful and it was not until 6 p.m. that the recreant knight, Ramsay MacDonald, appeared dressed in plus fours! Mrs. Barton sailed down the room with a beaming smile and swept him up to shake hands with his opponent and erstwhile colleague. I cannot say that either of them looked particularly

happy, but it brought great joy to the hostess, whose heart had been set on it, though she must have gone through agonies of apprehension at the imminent prospect of a fiasco. She was extremely generous and thoughtful for others and I am sure that the coming of the League to Geneva and the opportunity to render it valuable service had made the last fourteen years some of the happiest of her life.

Mr. Harold Butler, a British civil servant who succeeded Albert Thomas as head of the International Labour Office, and his wife were also prominent in bringing different nations together at their house. Dr. Dalton, at the annual Cambridge lunch during the Assembly, once ironically remarked upon its value in giving the opportunity of members of the Secretariat and International Labour Office to meet! The parochialism of the two bodies was extraordinary and I hardly ever met a member of the Labour Office or a delegate to one of their conferences except at the Butlers' house.

The house of Mrs. Ferrier at Versoix on the shores of the lake, ten miles from Geneva, was another rendezvous for the British Delegation and members of the Secretariat. Here amidst most delightful surroundings one could forget the cares and the frictions of one's work and the kindest of hostesses seemed to revel in entertaining her friends and in organising excursions into the surrounding country. For those who enjoyed her hospitality it must always be one of the most pleasant recollections of Geneva.

The Assembly meets every year in September when the work of the League is discussed and membership of the British delegation was always an interesting experience. It usually consisted of the Foreign and one or two other Ministers as chief delegates, with Under-Secretaries

and a prominent lady as substitute delegates. We were generally a party of forty or fifty and it included various officials from the Foreign Office and other departments, such as the Board of Trade, the Treasury, the Ministry of Health, Dominions and Colonial Office, etc., as well as the Service representatives. There were also masses of private secretaries and typists.

For the first two or three days all was confusion, while those who were new to the job tried to sort themselves out and learn their various duties. Riding the whirlwind, magnificently capable and imperturbable, was Mr. Alexander Cadogan, the head of the League of Nations Department of the Foreign Office. He was an older hand at Geneva than I was, and he left it to be the Minister, and later Ambassador, to China a year or two before my time came to an end. He is now Sir Alexander Cadogan, Permanent Under Secretary of State at the Foreign Office. He knew everything, was never in a hurry, never ruffled however irritating the caller might be, and he possessed an uncanny judgment of the right course to adopt in a given situation. He did not usually offer advice, but the man who consulted him and rejected it was undertaking a serious responsibility. He shunned enthusiasms, but he really believed in the League and a Secretary of State with him at his elbow had only himself to thank if he made mistakes. In the course of the Disarmament Conference his value became more and more apparent as difficulties increased. The Government were fortunate in having a public servant of exceptional quality at such a critical time.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretaries gained a valuable first-hand experience of the League which stands them in good stead in public life. Mr. Walter Elliot came out for two years running, but his expression of

strong views as to the inadequacy of the Press liaison and his offer to take control of it himself shocked Sir Austen Chamberlain so much that he did not return. He made a good impression at Geneva.

I cannot say that the co-ordination of the big delegation was good. In fact it hardly existed. During the Assembly there are six big committees and the representative and assistants on each committee should have a general idea of what is happening in the others. We should then have been spared the spectacle of our representative speaking in favour of holding an international conference on some subject in one committee, while our man on the fourth committee, dealing with League finance, steadily opposed it on the ground of expense! The French delegation was always the best prepared and worked as a team. The chief delegate held a meeting at 9 a.m. every morning at which each delegate briefly explained what was happening in his particular sphere on that day and the policy was settled beforehand. Our habits make such early-morning meetings quite impossible! The fact remains that, without some such arrangement, the chief delegate has not the time to co-ordinate and no one else can do it for him.

Mention of the British delegation would be incomplete without a reference to the hired cars provided. The Treasury had arranged for Geneva to be ransacked and a garage had been found which would let out taxis at a rate a few centimes lower than the normal tariff. While nearly all the delegations drove about in sumptuous cars (and the more luxurious the car the more insignificant the delegation), it was left to the British delegation to use the most ramshackle vehicles. There were always large crowds of sightseers, Press photographers, gendarmes and busybodies at the entrance of the hall where

the Assembly took place, to see the delegates arrive. After a monotonous succession of giant Renaults, Rolls-Royces, Mercédès and Hispano-Suizas had deposited their loads, the Union Jack would be seen fluttering and with a rattle of windows and grinding of gears an aged car would stagger up and out would step the august Sir Austen Chamberlain. The door might come off in the hands of the usher opening it, or a lamp might become detached. Indeed anything might happen! It was just like a performance by Harry Tate, the comedian, in his motor-car act. The frugality was perhaps commendable; no other nation could have carried it off! When the Labour Government came in it was a different story and three enormous Daimlers were brought from London at the cost of some £300. Of the two methods I thought the former was "*bien distingué*," as Talleyrand said of Castlereagh at the Congress of Vienna, when he appeared in ordinary evening dress without a star or a ribbon on his coat.

On the Sunday evening before the Assembly opened the Dominion delegations were always invited to an Empire discussion. These were renewed during the Assembly, if critical questions arose and common action was desirable and possible to arrange. Foreigners used to jeer and say that Great Britain always commanded seven votes but this was by no means true. Some of the Dominions would frequently be found opposed to us, though usually on less important questions. In any case the unanimity was nothing approaching that of the French with their Little Entente and other friends, or that even more powerful body, the Spanish-American *bloc* of fourteen or fifteen members which, whatever their internecine jealousies might be, always voted straight.

These Empire delegation meetings were family

affairs and plain speaking was always the rule. Sir Austen Chamberlain handled them extremely well; Mr. Ramsay MacDonald was at times less fortunate. Each Dominion had its different characteristics to be considered. They were usually represented by their High Commissioners and occasionally by Ministers as well. New Zealand always stood closest to the Mother Country with Australia alongside. Their Parliaments had never passed the Statute of Westminster, being quite satisfied with the relationship which had existed since the Peace Conference without further definition. Then came Canada, for several years represented by Senator Dandurand, and once at least by Mr. McKenzie King. Canada, as being the oldest, was the first Dominion to be on the Council and since then there has been an understanding that one seat should always be at the disposal of the Dominions in rotation. Canada stands firmly on her independent status and likes to demonstrate it, but she co-operates helpfully. She is specially sensitive to American opinion and regards herself as the interpreter of it to Great Britain and the other Dominions.

South Africa and the Irish Free State stood much more aloof. I do not think that General Hertzog was much interested in the League until he entered the Coalition with General Smuts or thought that South Africa could get much out of it. The word "independence" bulked so largely with him personally and with his party that the South African representative seemed to fear that too much co-operation with Great Britain would compromise it. During my latter years at Geneva they were usually represented by Mr. C. te Water, their High Commissioner in London, who made a deep impression upon me. He was, I believe, a Rugby international, and is a very fine figure of a man. Though at

a public school in England, his early boyhood had been embittered by the South African war and his outlook was not unnaturally tinged with his recollections of the sufferings of his race. He was not content, like many High Commissioners, to act merely as an official but spoke out boldly on important questions. I often thought that he was wasted in a post which, though representative, was mainly commercial, and that he would rapidly have made his mark in political life in South Africa. He is a sensitive man, who cannot remain silent in the face of what he believes to be injustice and fearlessly denounces it with eloquence and passion. His speeches on Manchuria, on disarmament and on Abyssinia put the moral issue in each case beyond a doubt and had much influence upon public opinion. In praising Mr. te Water one must not draw the conclusion that he possessed qualities which are not to be found among our own statesmen. We have men with no less sincerity, eloquence and courage, but they are hampered by grave responsibilities which prevent them speaking their minds with the same freedom. Mr. Stanley Bruce, the Australian High Commissioner and former Prime Minister, also has a great reputation for strength of character and sound judgment. These qualities were exhibited to particular advantage when he was President of the Council during a difficult period.

The Irish representatives were extremely interesting. In the days of President Cosgrave they were usually represented by the debonair Mr. Desmond Fitzgerald, poet, politician, Bohemian, and Mr. Kevin O'Higgins, the Attorney General. Both were young and must have had remarkable qualities to bring them to the top in that desperate struggle for nationality which the Free State had gone through. They had to play their part of "no

truckling to England," for they represented a nation which had recently been in arms against us, but they were too wise not to see that co-operation was worth while, so long as it was not outwardly too apparent. I got to know Mr. O'Higgins fairly well and it was a terrible blow to those of us who looked forward to meeting him annually at the Assembly to read that he had met the fate that has dogged so many great Irishmen. He was shot down in a Dublin street one Sunday morning outside a church where he had been attending Mass. He had been through terrible experiences, the most harrowing of which was the civil war that followed peace with Great Britain. He told me how he had to sign the death warrant of his dear friend Rory O'Connor, to whom he had been best man at his wedding. In appearance he was pale and nervous, but there was steel in his composition. We often talked of the future of the two races and he said to me once: "There are so many Irishmen and Englishmen lying in a common grave, who had fought for freedom in the war, that in the end the two nations must come together. The present phase will pass."

The Irish Free State, like many other small Powers, had a permanent representative at Geneva, and Mr. Sean Lester held the post for several years on behalf, first, of the Cosgrave and then of the de Valera Governments. He is a man of great sincerity and moral courage and he did much to shape the course of the Manchuria discussions. He showed to very great advantage as a member of the Council, during the Irish tenure of the seat reserved for the Dominions, and this procured for him nomination to the uneasy post of High Commissioner of Danzig. He is now an Under-Secretary General in the Secretariat. The League is the richer for Dominion statesmen like Lester and te Water, who have believed that "somehow

the right is the right" and have not failed through good and ill to be its champions.

President de Valera came from time to time. He seemed silent and aloof, but one could not fail to recognise his forthright integrity no less than his unbendable fixity of purpose. At one period he and Sir John Simon had some cordial conversations and the prospect of an Irish settlement looked so promising that a Cabinet Committee was hurriedly convened in London to meet Mr. de Valera on his way home. At lunch-time I met Lord Hailsham coming away from the conference which had met at 10.30 a.m. and I asked him how it was going. He replied, "We have not yet got beyond Strongbow." The negotiations broke down, as future ones may also fail, not from lack of goodwill but from the fact that the word "compromise" finds no place in Mr. de Valera's vocabulary.

In the summer of 1929 an important change in British politics took place when a Labour Government came into power after the General Election, though dependent upon Liberal votes. On this occasion Mr. Ramsay MacDonald felt unable to resume charge of the Foreign Office and Mr. Arthur Henderson's long service and powerful position in the party gained him the prize. He was not conspicuously qualified for the post, for he had never specialised very much in foreign affairs or had much contact with foreigners, but he had plenty of shrewd common sense and his long Trade Union experience had made him a good negotiator. I shall have more to say of him when I deal with the Disarmament Conference, during which I got to know him very well. He brought with him to the Foreign Office Dr. Hugh Dalton as Under-Secretary and Mr. Philip Noel Baker as his Parliamentary Private Secretary. These two were to

have far more influence upon foreign affairs than usually falls to the lot of holders of their particular posts. They were both Socialist intellectuals and connected with the London School of Economics. Dr. Dalton is a man of considerable gifts and strong character. He is also an earnest student of international affairs. In internal politics he has the reputation of being somewhat embittered and very much on the extreme Left Wing, but I had a great respect for his ability and I seem to see in him a future Foreign Secretary. Mr. Noel Baker, though apt to get carried away by his enthusiasms, is also well informed and inspired by a genuine devotion to the causes of the League and of world peace.

The new Government had only two or three months to consider a programme for the Assembly. They were determined to adopt a "forward" League policy and to make a big demonstration of their devotion to the international outlook.

I suppose there is a certain amount of claptrap in the professions of every political party; at least, speaking as one who has no party affiliations, I have certainly found it so. Yet the twin causes of peace and the League have always been supported by the Labour Party, both in and out of office, with passionate sincerity. This attitude is no doubt partly due to their views upon internationalism, but even more to the feeling that the economic miseries of war press far more heavily on the classes that they represent than on any other. They see more clearly than some of the elements in other parties that, if the League goes, we are back again to the law of the jungle and war as an instrument of policy. Their fatal weakness is that many of them cannot see that a strong League policy with military sanctions against any breaker of the peace must go hand in hand with adequate

armaments to enforce it. There are fortunately men in the party that have a clearer vision. Nothing, however, has done the Labour Party more harm than the paradox of demanding that we should appear on every battlefield as champions of collective security, while refusing the necessary credits to enable our fighting men to be adequately armed and provided with sufficient reserves of ammunition.

Mr. Henderson and his assistants put their heads together and decided that their "forward" League policy was to consist of four lines of approach. They proposed firstly that we should sign the "optional clause" of the Statute of the Permanent Court of International Justice; secondly, an investigation into the reorganisation of the Secretariat; thirdly, that a Committee should be set up to consider amendments to the Covenant to bring it into harmony with the Pact of Paris and thereby eliminate war entirely; and fourthly, that the Model Treaty "to strengthen the means of preventing war" should be converted into a general convention and opened for signature. Generally speaking it was an effective programme and gave a lead to the Assembly.

The signature of the so-called "optional clause" means that the signatory accepts the compulsory jurisdiction of the Permanent Court in any dispute of a legal character. To this we prudently added reservations; firstly concerning facts prior to our accession to the clause, secondly stipulating a preliminary examination by the Council, and thirdly excepting disputes between members of the British Empire. All the Dominions followed suit, except that the Irish Free State characteristically omitted the last reservation. Fourteen States, including the Dominions, followed our example in signing the clause.

The "Model" Treaty was never properly considered

by the Departments upon whom the burden of working it would fall and in the end it fizzled out with the change of Government. It had a certain value as between two States with land frontiers who honestly desired to avoid frontier incidents but it was hardly suitable for the British Empire.

The Labour Government brought out a strong delegation headed by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, the Prime Minister, Mr. Henderson, the Foreign Secretary, and Mr. Willie Graham, President of the Board of Trade. Very wisely Lord Cecil was invited to join it and his great experience was a valuable asset to them. He seemed indeed more at home than he had ever been in a Conservative delegation. It was pleasant to see the almost naïve delight of the Labour representatives in gaining power after so many years in opposition, broken only by a brief and unhappy experience of government in 1924. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald always feared that the machinery of government might break down with such a number of its members untried in departmental administration. There certainly were creaks at times but there was plenty of ability among them, a loyal and understanding Civil Service, and a superbly efficient Secretary of the Cabinet, Sir Maurice Hankey, saved them from many pitfalls in the earlier stages. They did extremely well at Geneva. Mr. Graham was a competent economist and financier, but he had the dispiriting task of pleading the lost cause of Free Trade to a tariff-ridden world, as the cure for international troubles. He was a gentle, lovable man and used to talk with so much affection of his Scottish constituents whom he regarded as a great family for which he was responsible. It must almost have broken his heart when they rejected him at the General Election in 1931.

One incident in which I was involved with the new Government had its amusing side. In the autumn of 1928 I had been appointed Deputy Director of Military Operations and Intelligence at the War Office in addition to my League of Nations duties. Under the Director, I was responsible for the Intelligence side of the Directorate. This was convenient in many ways because my two interests, the League and Intelligence, were a useful cross-check upon one another. The new post brought me more directly behind the scenes and I had to deal with the veritable *arcana Imperii* and take my share in the preparation of policy. The Secretary of State for War in the new Cabinet was Mr. Tom Shaw. He held a position of eminence in Trade Union circles and it was essential that he should be rewarded by Cabinet office. He was a genial, kindly man who had risen by sheer ability and force of character to be the Secretary of a big Trade Union, but he did not find the War Office congenial, as he was by conviction a pacifist, and he was content to play a somewhat passive rôle.

On a Saturday afternoon in August, 1929, I was summoned from the cricket field where I was playing for my local Club to the telephone in the nearest public-house, where I was told that the War Office wanted to speak to me. The Director of Military Operations was touring South Wales at the time and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff was, I knew, in the New Forest for the week-end and without a telephone. I was *de facto* Chief of Staff in an emergency. I learnt on the telephone that riots had broken out in Palestine and the Acting High Commissioner had wired both to Egypt and to the War Office for immediate military assistance. I jumped into a car and went to the War Office immediately. After consultations there I arranged for the despatch

of one battalion from Egypt by troop-carrying aeroplanes and another from Malta to be taken by the Navy, who undertook to place cruisers at our disposal. When this had been done I thought of the Secretary of State, as the movement of troops was a grave question of policy, which he ought to endorse. His private secretary managed to get him on the telephone and the only answer I got was, "Mr. Tom Shaw says that he is a pacifist and does not wish to have anything to do with war or military operations. All he wants General Temperley to do is to put down on a piece of paper the number of troops that are being moved so that he will be in a position to tell the Cabinet what has taken place."

There was an attractive candour about his point of view, even if it was not particularly helpful as political head of the department. In truth, since Lord Haldane and, after the War, Mr. Winston Churchill, the War Office has usually had a political chief who took little interest in the department but had to be given Cabinet rank, because his services or prestige were needed in other fields. I am not referring to Mr. Duff Cooper or Mr. Hore-Belisha, both of whom came to the War Office after I had left. Lord Hailsham had the intellect and force of character to have been another Haldane but, though he supported the War Office firmly in the Cabinet, he was not particularly interested as there was no money for reorganisation and his heart was set upon the Woolsack.

I must now return to the fortunes of the Preparatory Commission which had held a meeting in 1928. This had been almost entirely occupied by listening to a series of propaganda proposals by M. Litvinoff, who wished to take the opportunity of celebrating his first appearance at the Commission by making as big a nuisance of himself as possible. I could never see what good he thought

he was doing himself or his Government by behaving as he did. There was really nothing else to discuss, because there was a complete deadlock and, until the promised negotiations through diplomatic channels succeeded in resolving it, there was no possibility of getting a second reading of a Draft Convention. Spurred on, however, by a resolution of the 1928 Assembly, which practically forced them to meet early in 1929, the Sixth Session assembled on April 15th.

The first business was the consideration of the new Soviet Draft which aimed at proportional reduction. The idea was to divide the States into three classes according to the size of their armaments, and to fix a mathematical co-efficient of reduction on an ascending scale of severity for each class. This was riddled with criticism from every quarter, the French being particularly sarcastic, and was finally rejected. There is, as a matter of fact, a good deal to be said for a proportional all-round reduction. The difficulty was that few States would agree that they were satisfied with their existing level of armaments vis-à-vis their neighbours. Great Britain, for instance, had reduced largely, and Germany and the other defeated States would naturally claim exemption. Italy was another State which claimed special treatment on the ground of precipitate reduction. Once exceptions were admitted of course the whole scheme fell to the ground. Another objection was that no one really knew what armaments the various States possessed and there was no basis from which reductions could be made.

Some day, however, it may be possible to return to a simple scheme of this type. I am convinced that extreme simplicity is essential. The trouble is that the moment an apparently simple scheme is produced, the logical

Latin mind gets to work. Committees are appointed, every difficulty and possible evasion is carefully scrutinised. In the end it is invariably swamped by a mass of verbiage, definitions, exceptions, technicalities, and theoretical objections, under which the original proposal has completely disappeared.

Having disposed of M. Litvinoff's scheme the Commission then proceeded to stage a most hypocritical betrayal of the cause of true disarmament. In the sacred name of "conciliation" delegate after delegate got up and withdrew his reservations upon this or that principle of disarmament for which he had made a stand. By the end of it all there was very little left.

Mr. Gibson, the representative of the United States, led off by saying that, much as his Government was attached to the principle of limiting trained reserves, he felt that a continuous barrier of opposition would prevent progress and he accordingly withdrew the reservation he had made. M. Massigli, the French delegate, with tears in his voice, declared that he had "just listened with deep emotion to this historic decision." He might well do so for it meant the end of any real reduction of armies. Lord Cushendun, in the accents of a chief mourner, regretfully agreed with Mr. Gibson. He received, however, no fulsome thanks from the French delegate, for we had already sold the pass in this respect in the Anglo-French Naval Compromise. Count Bernstorff, however, stood firmly to his guns and said he would never give way.

The stage was then occupied by the Chinese delegate who at this late hour proposed the abolition of conscription, though he did not indicate how the war lords in his own country would be likely to carry it out. This proposal was buried with due decorum. The delegates seemed on

the point of bursting into tears at their inability to accept it. The French and Little Entente then declared their unalterable opposition to direct limitation of material (i.e., by enumerating the number of guns, machine guns, tanks, etc., that each State was to possess). A vote was taken upon this issue and the Commission declared against it.

M. Massigli again rose and informed the Commission that, in the spirit of conciliation, his delegation would no longer insist upon limitation of budgetary expenditure. This was rapturously welcomed by the United States delegate, who was again driven into ecstasies of enthusiasm when the French made the further sacrifice of giving up investigation on the spot by an international commission to verify that States were not exceeding the permitted scale of armaments.

In this orgy of "conciliation," "self-sacrifice" and emotion the Commission finally adjourned with the proud satisfaction of having eliminated most of the methods of land disarmament that were worth preserving. As Sir William Harcourt said on another occasion, "the Service was fully choral."

It should be observed that naval disarmament had no part in these "concessions." At the beginning of the Session Mr. Gibson made a very helpful speech on the prospects of naval disarmament which was welcomed by the Naval Powers. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, the Prime Minister, went to the United States in September, 1929, to see Mr. Hoover, and the two statesmen laid the foundations of the success of the London Naval Conference, which met the following year.

CHAPTER SIX

THE PREPARATORY COMMISSION

1930. The London Naval Conference. The shadow of Hitlerism. Preparatory Commission—the last phase. Open Franco-German disagreement.

THE year 1930 opened with some cheering news for disarmament. The London Naval Conference had met in January and had come to a successful conclusion on April 21st. I was not present at the Conference and I do no more than give a sketch of its results. A series of naval conversations had taken place between British and American statesmen and it was expected that there would be no serious differences of opinion between the two countries, while the Japanese attitude had on the whole been helpful in the preliminary negotiations. The French and the Italians on the other hand were likely to encounter difficulties owing to Italy's claim to parity.

After many vicissitudes, which I shall not describe, agreement was reached upon a holiday in the replacement of capital ships, a limitation of the tonnage in submarines, and new rules about aircraft carriers. We accepted in principle a limit of 50 cruisers, whereas in 1927 we had insisted upon 70. A complete allotment of cruiser tonnage was worked out on this basis between the United States, Japan and ourselves, which gave us parity with the United States and Japan a 70 per cent ratio, a slight increase on the figure of the Washington Treaty. No agreement could be reached on the question of parity between France and Italy, which the former refused to accept. The French had been extremely active, as might be expected, on the question of "security." They first proposed a Mediterranean pact and then proceeded to

entangle us in some very delicate negotiations on an interpretation of the famous Article 16 of the Covenant. Our chief refuge in this respect had always been its vagueness and any more precise definition of its language was contrary to our interests; various formulæ were hawked round and I thought at one time that we should be committed. Fortunately we withdrew in time. The chief delegates were Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Mr. Stimson, the Secretary of State of the United States, Mr. Wakatsuki, a former Prime Minister for Japan, M. Tardieu, the French Prime Minister and Signor Grandi, the Italian Foreign Minister. It was a great success for Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, who handled the Conference very well, and Mr. Alexander, the First Lord of the Admiralty, proved to be a good negotiator. All the delegates displayed forbearance and a desire to make the Conference a success: the careful preparation beforehand by Mr. Hoover and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald was justified by results. It was a great achievement to get a comprehensive limitation of naval armaments among the three Great Naval Powers and it removed all danger of a clash in the Pacific, which a renewal of competition would inevitably have caused. It also saved them immense sums of money. Mr. Alexander in a public speech said that it had saved us an expenditure of £60,000,000 during the next five years. The failure to obtain the signatures of Italy and France to the vital limitation clauses was due to absorption in Continental politics, where the situation was steadily deteriorating.

For some time the relations between the two countries had been indifferent. It had begun over quarrels in North Africa. It was intensified in a struggle for the hegemony of South Eastern Europe, where each country

tried to attract the smaller States within its own orbit. France was the more successful because she had begun earlier and had more substantial inducements to offer in the way of preponderating military strength and money for loans. Italy was a poor country, but Fascism had created a new national spirit, which fiercely resented the settlement of the Peace Treaties. By her opposition to the *status quo* and by championing the cause of Hungary and Austria she passed into the group of "unsatisfied" Powers. By 1928 Signor Mussolini was openly advocating Treaty revision and was at the same time demanding parity in armaments with France. This could only be achieved by a drastic reduction for the latter, as Italy had not the financial resources to increase to the French levels. Thus could be found common ground with Germany and Russia. One began to see the formation of two opposing groups in Europe, the inevitable precursor of war.

In the final session of the Preparatory Commission, which is described below, Italy was generally in the same lobby as the Germans and the Russians, and in opposition to the rest of the Commission. They were odd bed-fellows, and, as the new-found friends co-operated ever more closely, the situation increased in gravity.

In Germany also there had been a considerable upheaval. For seven years the people had followed Stresemann in a policy of fulfilment of obligations and working in and with the League and the Western Powers. Under the Dawes Plan, which had given them some relief, they had between 1924 and 1929 fulfilled their engagements and had paid four hundred million pounds in reparations. It is true that they had largely been settled by means of loans from the United States and England. The Young Plan, which provided further

alleviations, superseded the Dawes Plan on May 17th, 1930. There were other great successes to which Stresemann and Dr. Brüning, who faithfully continued his policy, could point. After considerable reductions in the number of troops in the Demilitarised Zone had been effected, as the result of Stresemann's pressure, the Second Zone had been evacuated in November, 1929, and the Third and last Zone had been given up in June, 1930, 4½ years before the date fixed in the Treaty.

Nothing was ever enough to satisfy Stresemann's appetite. At the famous interview at Thoiry he had put forward a long list of concessions which, in addition to those he subsequently gained, had included the immediate return of the Saar and a French loan. M. Briand and Sir Austen Chamberlain were inclined to resist the evergrowing demands which savoured of blackmail. Yet, perhaps Herr Stresemann knew his people best. It was a race against time. How long could he hold his people to the policy of appeasement and co-operation without substantial trophies in the shape of Allied concessions? Ought the Allied Governments to have surrendered what they were prepared to give, more rapidly and more wholeheartedly? Would the gesture have averted the catastrophe?

When history assesses the ultimate responsibilities, it will no doubt give answers to these questions. What they will be I do not know, but I feel fairly certain that the crucial period when Germany turned from the paths of peace and co-operation will be found to be between 1929 and 1930. The full effect of that departure has not yet been determined, but its trend is painfully evident. It was in the hands of Briand and Chamberlain more than any other two men that the issues lay. Had Stresemann called "Wolf, wolf" too often? Would their own people

have backed them in making concessions? Would a bolder policy of cancellation of debts, economic reconstruction and Treaty concessions have averted Hitlerism and all its consequences? Who knows?

Stresemann had died in 1929 and the writing on the wall was painfully evident. Professor Arnold Toynbee in his Review of International Affairs 1930 wrote of that period: "To German eyes, at the moment, a great and menacing darkness veiled the whole of time and eternity that lay beyond the no longer distant term of the current summer and autumn. To a foreign observer who visited Germany, at this date, it was a strange and awful spectacle to see a whole nation—and this one of the greatest and most civilised nations in the world—wrestling heroically against fate, yet half paralysed, in its titanic struggle, by the conviction that all the time its feet are irrevocably set upon the paths of destruction. . . . On Saturday, June 20th, 1931, a financial collapse in Germany was only just anticipated and averted by President Hoover's announcement at Washington of his historical proposal for a twelve months' moratorium on all inter-governmental debts. The salvation of the German people, and perhaps of mankind at large, was ultimately accomplished by a margin not of months but of hours."

The outward and visible sign of this change of heart in Germany was the General Election of September 14th, 1930, at which the Nazi Party increased its seats in the Reichstag from 12 to 107 and the Communists from 54 to 77. The four and a half million voters who had cast their votes for Communism and the six and a half million for Hitlerism were a direct challenge to constitutional government. Out of an electorate of thirty-four millions, eleven millions had voted for violence and repudiation of the Peace Treaties. There was at that time

a good deal of common ground between the Nazis and the Communists, the Left Wing of the Nazi Party being distinctly Communistic.

The German people had lost hope. The great slump of 1929 had fallen upon them with crushing severity after years of reckless spending and actual insolvency. It was not only detestation of the existing foreign policy but despair and economic depression at home which caused the revulsion of feeling. There were large numbers of Germans who had not eaten meat for two years; many thousands of workmen were working ten hours a day for a wage of 3d. an hour. In the winter of 1930 the number of registered unemployed rose to 4,980,000. The voters merely expressed their inability to tolerate such an economic situation. They were determined to turn to the parties of Youth and Hope that promised an end of their misery.

When driven to extremes, the moderate Socialists turned to Communism, while the bourgeois and the parties of the Right gravitated towards Hitlerism. The two parties, differing in ideals but not in methods, told the electors that, to obtain relief, they must denounce the Peace Treaties and refuse to pay reparations. Behind the Nazis stood the Stahlhelm, an older and more conservative organisation, and there was some friction between them. But the latter were composed of a million ex-service men, well trained, organised and equipped. Their leaders described them as "a strategic reserve behind the Right flank should the need arise." The appeal was irresistible and another General Election could only increase the forces of revolution. From that day Herr Hitler's ultimate accession to power was a certainty. The old President and his personal nominees for the Chancellorship could juggle with the Constitution

while he lived, but the Stresemann policy was doomed.

The effect in France was profound. Briand and his friends, who had for years sincerely worked for peace, saw his policy crumbling in the dust, while the whole Nationalist Right cynically said "I told you so." They had always declared that Germany would maintain a pretence of moderation and fulfilment so long as the Rhineland remained occupied and, when that ceased, the puppets would disappear and Germany would come out in her true colours. It certainly proved an accurate forecast, but it was a combination of circumstances and the expression of feeling of people who were at their last gasp which produced the situation, rather than deliberate planning. France swung over to a more militant policy and began to take stock of her armaments. The Herriot-Briand policy of rapprochement and disarmament, however hesitatingly it had been preached, was for the time being definitely dead.

It was in the interests of peace that in 1929 M. Briand launched his plan for a European Union. He stated that its *raison d'être* was primarily economic and twenty-seven States met at Geneva in May, 1930, to discuss it. However, it was not surprising to learn from this illustrious Frenchman in a subsequent memorandum that "all possibility of progress along the road of economic union was rigorously determined by the question of security." The suspicion was strong that his real intention was to create some kind of pan-European Protocol, which would in some way provide increased security for France. The intention was good but the times were too serious and it died a lingering death, killed by increasing international friction and mistrust.

From this brief sketch of what was happening in Germany it will be apparent that things were very much

more difficult for Count Bernstorff when the Preparatory Commission met. Both Dr. Brüning, the Chancellor, and he himself were now between two fires. If co-operation had been infrequent before, owing to the disarmed condition of Germany, it now became impossible. The slightest concession at Geneva would have been extremely damaging to the Government, which had to defend its position against a Nazi Party flushed with success. We were in consequence to witness an even greater absence of compromise and an accentuated brusqueness of utterance, which had never been conspicuously cordial. We realised that he had a part to play and he discharged his duty unflinchingly. With the French our relations became much more cordial.

I now return once more to disarmament. The Committee of Arbitration and Security met in May and continued their discussions upon the Treaty to strengthen the means of preventing war; they also succeeded in drawing up a Convention on Financial Assistance. The latter owed its origin to a Finnish suggestion and had been intermittently discussed by the Preparatory Commission. The idea was a good one.

In the event of any State being the victim of an aggression the Convention embodied a scheme for a League guarantee of a loan to enable it to obtain financial help in the money markets of the world. Each member of the League would be a partial guarantor up to a limited amount while the financially strong States, that is the Great Powers, would be special guarantors and would really underwrite the loan. The attraction it had for our Government and for the Treasury was that financial help to the victim was a far less onerous and less complicated matter than the thorny question of economic sanctions against the aggressor. Indeed in

those days of theoretical discussion it looked almost like a respectable substitute.

We agreed to sign the Convention as part of a Disarmament Convention but not otherwise. Twenty-seven other States followed our lead. It was thus for the time put in cold storage. It will be remembered that Abyssinia, in the hour of her fate, applied for a League loan on this model, but it was refused. As the counterpart of coercing the aggressor it would be a useful measure but as a substitute for economic or military sanctions it is an ignominious alternative. No one with practical experience of an aggression by a Great Power would now believe it to be adequate.

The Preparatory Commission for Disarmament met for the last time on November 9th, 1930, in what was still described as the Sixth Session, though it had adjourned eighteen months before. It was felt that the time was now ripe for a further meeting owing to the success of the London Naval Conference; and nominal agreement had become easier, as real disarmament had been made more difficult by the "mutual concessions" described in the previous chapter. When the Session opened, Lord Cecil, as the representative of the Labour Government, once more occupied the seat that he had vacated in 1927 and played the leading part. It was agreed that the Commission should now proceed to a second reading and even reopen discussion on any articles which had already been passed at a second reading, if the majority of the Commission so desired. It was also decided that there should be no general discussion. M. Litvinoff immediately stood up and began to read a propaganda speech of interminable length, ranging over the whole subject of disarmament and containing the usual abuse of other Powers. This was too much even for the courteous

President, who interrupted and drew his attention to the fact that he was out of order. M. Litvinoff smiled blandly and went on to the bitter end. As a punishment, the President would not allow the French translation to be read, but said that it would be circulated with the minutes. This drew forth sarcastic protests from the Soviet delegate, who deplored the fact that French-speaking delegations would be denied the pleasure of hearing his speech.

The first articles to be considered were those dealing with effectives. Count Bernstorff rose and in one of his biting speeches reserved the whole position of the German delegation and threw upon the other Powers the responsibility for the elimination of any real disarmament. He followed this up by again submitting amendments upon the question of trained reserves to the articles on effectives, which had been accepted at first reading. An interesting discussion took place upon the French principle of *égalité* of service, to which I have already alluded. The French delegate once more maintained that, to the French, conscription must be universal and every fit man must serve. Their idea of equality would not tolerate exemptions of any kind. This was contested by the Italians, Dutch and others. The Dutch in particular only summoned to the colours 20,000 out of an annual class of 60,000 fit men. There was a liberal system of exemptions and the balance were selected by lot. It was the last time that the subject of trained reserves was ever discussed either in the Commission or in the Conference itself. It is manifest that so long as the French thesis is maintained there can be no reduction of personnel. The old discussions were also renewed on limiting the period of service, without any particular result.

We then came to the thorny subject of the limitation

of land war material and, although it had nominally received a second reading, Lord Cecil succeeded in re-opening the discussion.

I had been able to convince him before we left London of the merits of limiting material by expenditure rather than by enumeration and he made an excellent speech on these lines. It was certainly the less drastic method of the two; acceptance of the other rendered investigation on the spot by an International Commission necessary, and this neither we nor the Americans were, at that stage at any rate, prepared to accept.

Mr. Gibson, the delegate of the U.S.A., was against limitation by expenditure for what he called "constitutional reasons." We had always observed that the Americans used this argument when they did not like any particular scheme, though we were unable to discover any clause in the American Constitution which dealt with the subject! He was of course well aware of American public opinion and he was no doubt correct in saying that a Disarmament Convention which laid a controlling hand upon the American budget would not be ratified by the Senate.

Italy, who had in the past stood as a rule shoulder to shoulder with France, came out strongly in favour of limitation by enumeration. They were obviously anxious about the immense stocks of war material that the French possessed. Their delegate criticised the budgetary method as "ignoring the vast differences in existing armaments and legalising them by allowing them to continue." Italy had in fact disarmed after the War almost as rapidly as we had and she was then so poor that her armaments were very inadequate vis-à-vis France. High policy was also driving her into the opposite camp.

Count Bernstorff again emphatically declared that limitation of material by enumeration was a condition *sine qua non* of Germany signing a Convention. There were several different proposals and a good deal of confused voting. Finally nine votes were cast for direct limitation of material and nine against, with seven abstentions. Some form of budgetary limitation of material was accepted by sixteen votes to three with six abstentions.

The naval and air articles were accepted without much discussion. The limitation of the total annual expenditure upon land, naval and air forces was also agreed upon, subject to an American reservation. Civil aviation had bulked more and more largely as a potential reinforcement of military aviation in the course of the years of discussion in the Preparatory Commission, more particularly as it had made great strides in Germany under circumstances which suggested ulterior motives. The French had been deeply suspicious of German developments, and M. Massigli in this the final session made a strong speech, pointing out the danger. It was indeed undeniable that civil machines could be converted into military ones in a few hours by fitting bomb-racks and bomb-sights, and that civil pilots could easily be trained for military flying. He therefore proposed that publicity should be provided for, in the case of civil aviation, and that the number and total horse power of civil aeroplanes should be communicated as well as the subvention given by Governments to civil aviation. Lord Cecil and a great many delegates supported the proposal.

Count Bernstorff for the first time was somewhat embarrassed at having to resist a proposal that was in the true interests of disarmament. He said that "the developments of peaceful communication must in no case be

regarded as the starting point for armaments, especially since no account was taken of such vital and purely military standards as war material in reserve, trained reserves or merchant ships, which were even allowed to be fitted with installations for carrying armaments." He made the best of a bad case, but in fact it became subsequently clear at the Conference itself that control of civil aviation is really the key to the whole question of air limitation. It was a tactical error on his part to spoil an unimpeachable record by this slip at the end. He had, no doubt, strict instructions to vote against any control of or publicity for civil aviation.

The question of possible "derogations" from the Convention had been carefully considered, that is to say, the right of any signatory to divest itself of its obligations before the period of the Convention had expired in case of any circumstances threatening its security. It was an extremely important point for, though the right must obviously be accorded, it must be hedged in by provisions to prevent abuse. Our proposal was that derogation should be permitted (*a*) if war broke out, (*b*) if threatened with a rebellion, or (*c*) if effected with the consent of the Council. There were other somewhat similar suggestions. The final draft was to the effect that the Convention might be modified (i.e., the State concerned might re-arm) if "a change of circumstances constituted a menace to national security." It would be necessary to notify the other signatories of the extent of the temporary modifications and give reasons. The French, British and Polish delegations let it be known that what they particularly had in mind was an unforeseen development in civil aviation by another Power. It is hardly necessary to particularise to which Power the French and Poles were referring!

On the recommendation of Mr. Gibson, a sentence was added: "Thereupon the other High Contracting Parties shall promptly advise as to the situation presented." These words were of extreme significance and should be carefully marked. In the course of Mr. Gibson's speech, he said that the reasons for a release from Treaty obligations were of infinite variety. There were "escalator" clauses in the Washington and London Naval Treaties owing to the reluctance to be bound for a definite period in unforeseen and unforeseeable circumstances menacing national existence. In another category were definite apprehensions as to the future, which could not be entered into any treaty. The right of self-preservation must be safeguarded and, if it were so, it justified the acceptance of comparatively low figures for armaments. By broadening the opportunities for escape, the probability of observance would be increased.

All this was very well said. The magical word was "advise" in the sentence that he proposed to incorporate. The French in particular as well as ourselves were most anxious to secure American co-operation and consultation in the event of a breach of the Treaty. There was an underlying feeling that, if a Power agreed to consult or advise, it could hardly stop short at that and must go further to combine with the rest in common action against the treaty-breaker.

M. Tardieu during the London Naval Treaty negotiations had tried hard to induce Mr. Stimson to sign a consultative pact. He dryly replied something to this effect: "If consultation means nothing more than it appears to mean, it is useless. If it does mean any more, then it is misleading because the United States is not prepared to raise hopes of active co-operation, which are bound to be disappointed."

Mr. Gibson's declaration was a most welcome advance on the part of the United States Government. So impressed was M. Paul-Boncour with its importance that he tacitly dropped any further insistence upon the idea of adding the power of investigation on the spot by the Permanent Disarmament Commission, to which the French attached capital importance. He knew that the Americans would not accept it and he wisely considered that, after their hopeful offer, they ought not to be embarrassed by a controversial proposal on the same subject. Once again during the Disarmament Conference the Americans were to renew an offer of active co-operation in similar circumstances.

The tide is now running strongly in the other direction and the popular cry is to keep clear of Europe and at all costs to prevent the country being involved in war. One must pay a tribute to the two Presidents, Hoover and Roosevelt, who inspired the two offers. It required courage to make them, as they must have been well aware of the difficulty of steering a Convention containing such a clause through the American Senate. It is one of the terrible handicaps from which the American President and his Cabinet suffer in international relations that they can never confidently negotiate a treaty, because, under the constitution, it has to be ratified by the Senate, who have inflicted the humiliation upon their President of rejecting a treaty which he has negotiated and recommended to them. Looking back on the whole tempestuous post-war period, one must recognise the valiant, if fitful, efforts of the American people to play their part in international co-operation. The world has need of the help of a great country which is inspired by idealism and sincerely devoted to peace. Each time they have made an advance

some unfortunate incident has occurred, which has caused them to retire into their shell, and the forces in the country making for isolation have been greatly strengthened and increased. It must be said, on the other hand, that they have proved extraordinarily difficult for the democracies of Europe to deal with, because they never know how far their representatives are in a position to "deliver the goods."

The discussions on the final provisions of the Draft Convention proceeded and there was a scene of almost painful intensity. For reasons which I cannot now remember, Lord Cecil, as British representative, submitted a draft article, which ran as follows: "The present Convention shall not in any way diminish the obligations of previous treaties under which certain High Contracting Parties have agreed to limit their land, naval and air armaments and have thus fixed in relation to one another their respective rights and obligations in this connection."

On the face of it this seemed innocuous enough, and was interpreted by Lord Cecil and accepted by Mr. Gibson as applying to the Naval Treaties. To that no exception could be taken. Unfortunately neither the French nor the Germans could see it in that innocent light. The former descried in it the possibility of confirming the disarmament clauses of the Peace Treaties, which the Germans on their side indignantly repudiated.

At last the gloves were off! France, after five years of theorising about disarmament and with the remembrance of the Nazi triumphs at the recent General Election ringing in her ears, was going to take this heaven-sent opportunity of saying what she really meant. M. Massigli, subtle diplomat and product of the Ecole Normale, arose to put the French attitude with remorse-

less clarity. "When the Conference meets," he said, "France and other Powers will submit proposals in figures for limitation. These will be calculated in reference to a given situation; they will correspond to a given degree of security. The régime which results from the strict application of the military clauses of the Peace Treaties forms an essential factor. By this text the Powers concerned define the conditions under which they accept figures of limitation to be inserted in the Convention." He went on to propose the following addition to the article:—

"The following High Contracting Parties, signatory to the said treaties, declare that the limits fixed for their armaments are accepted by them in relation to the obligations referred to in the previous paragraph, the maintenance of such obligation being for them an essential condition for the observance of the present Convention."

Here we had an uncompromising declaration by the French Government that there would be no disarmament for France and her friends unless the ex-enemy States remained disarmed by an almost indefinite perpetuation of the Peace Treaties. It was hardly a tenable proposition either in equity or policy.

Count Bernstorff immediately replied. He said that, in the draft in its present form, the idea of genuine disarmament survived only in the title. He would take the opportunity offered by this article (No. 53) to vote against the whole draft Convention. "Germany will not renew her signature to the disarmament clauses of the Treaty of Versailles. I beg you, Gentlemen, to renounce any such illusion." He again demanded, on behalf of his country, parity of security.

In a hushed Assembly Lord Cecil proceeded to reprove

Count Bernstorff. For some reason he was always irritated by him and he took strong exception to the suggestion that there was no disarmament in the draft Convention, giving a full account of what had been achieved. He accused Count Bernstorff of thinking only of land disarmament and ignoring the great success of the Naval Treaties. Finally he said that he had given very little help in making the Convention. There was much truth in what he said, but he completely ignored the vital point brought up by the French and repudiated by Count Bernstorff, and he eventually voted for Article 53 with the French addition. While there might be some legal validity in this article, the addendum must have wrecked the Conference. It made any co-operation by the Germans impossible and we ought never to have voted for it.

Count Bernstorff, who for reasons of internal politics had been obliged to take a strong line, replied to Lord Cecil with a gentleness that I had not expected. He said he was an old friend and had worked with him on many platforms connected with the League. He contended that land armaments were for them the chief part of the whole question and that they had been sacrificed to naval armaments. He reiterated that, if there was to be any disarmament, there must be security for all. I could detect no real flaw in his argument. The article was eventually carried by 14 votes with some abstentions. Though no one could have accused me at the time of tenderness towards Germany, my sympathies were entirely with them on this particular issue. It is all ancient history now, but I saw no reason why we should support the French on such a debatable issue, except as a matter of general policy.

The close of the Commission was marked by an

optimistic speech from Lord Cecil who, however, qualified it to some extent by saying that the real test would be when the figures were filled in. Many delegates referred with appreciation to his work in the final session. It was certainly deserved, for he had carried the Commission on his shoulders and his enthusiasm and unwavering resourcefulness in turning difficult corners made the document a much better one than ever seemed possible. Mr. Gibson professed grave disappointment, while Count Bernstorff and M. Lunarchavsky of course disapproved of the whole draft. M. Massigli, the French delegate, made the expected declaration as to the close connection between security and disarmament. The complete agreement of the Little Entente with this view caused no surprise.

My own feelings were less concerned with the utter inadequacy of the draft Convention as a framework than with the darkening international horizon to which I have referred. I could not believe that within another twelve months delegates would be sitting round a table quietly filling in figures of substantial disarmament. It seemed to me that the people of the world were being misled by the optimistic speeches of their public men to a future for disarmament that was bound to prove a ghastly delusion.

It is much easier to be a pessimist than an optimist and I never admired Lord Cecil more than when he refused to be discouraged. He saw the issues clearly at the last session and realised, more than most, what the odds were. He would not give the enemies of the League and of disarmament the satisfaction of an admission of partial failure. It was practically his last appearance on the Geneva stage, though his influence is still felt behind the scenes. I parted from this great-hearted statesman with keen regret.

CHAPTER SEVEN

WORLD FINANCIAL CRISIS

1931. Disarmament. World Financial Crisis. Austro-German Customs union. Labour differences and fall of Labour Government. Mr. Henderson's views.

THE year 1931 was big with Fate for the world; tragedy after tragedy kept on occurring with monotonous regularity, the greater number of which could be traced to the financial and economic chaos that had resulted from the world war. It is my general intention to confine myself to comment upon the outstanding political events with which I was directly concerned and not to try to write a general history of a singularly complex series of events. Yet I am bound at times to go further afield in order to link up my story as a coherent whole.

To begin with disarmament. The Council of the League at their meeting on January 25th, 1931, should have been presided over by Dr. Curtius, the German Foreign Minister. He elected, however, to stand aside at that session, as he had some matters to bring forward on behalf of his country and preferred to have the greater freedom of sitting as an ordinary member. The Presidency then passed, according to the rules, to the next in alphabetical order, which happened to be Great Britain. It was this accident, curiously enough, that caused Mr. Arthur Henderson at the May Session to be chosen as President of the Disarmament Conference. The Council had been impressed with the way that he had discharged his duties, cutting short discussion and stopping irrelevancies with an efficiency unheard of among League chairmen. When the matter came up in May the French and their friends were pushing M. Benes very

hard for the post. He certainly had many great qualifications but neither the Italians nor the Germans would accept him, as he was too much in the pockets of the French. Three other members of the Council at least were also opposed. M. Politis for similar reasons was also unacceptable. Finally Signor Grandi suggested Mr. Henderson and pointed out his great success as chairman of the Council. It was also felt that it would be a great advantage to have a chairman to conduct the very necessary negotiations before the Conference commenced, with the whole machinery of a Foreign Office behind him. In default of agreement on any other candidate his election became a certainty.

Mr. Henderson, before accepting, had to refer the invitation to his Government. It was a bitter pill for Mr. Ramsay MacDonald. There was no love lost between them and he was bound to be jealous of so great an international honour being offered to his rival. But he had even stronger reasons than mere vanity, because he had intended to propose General Smuts for the post. There is no doubt that he would have been an ideal choice. He was possessed of an extremely subtle mind; he had had great international experience, and was remote from European controversies. For all Henderson's good qualities, General Smuts was a much quicker-witted man, with wider horizons. Mr. MacDonald, however, could only bow to what was in fact a *fait accompli.*

No one could have foreseen that Mr. Henderson would be a private individual by August or that about the same time he would become a very sick man indeed, so much so that few of us expected him to survive the Conference. He was never able to conduct the preliminary negotiations, which were really vital, because he had not the machinery and his health was so bad that he had not

the strength for the exacting work of chairman. Mr. Henderson did his best with little support except from the secretariat but, taking it all in all, it might have been better if he had resigned in August and the lot had fallen upon General Smuts. It is hardly likely that it would have made the difference between success and failure, but his swordlike intelligence might have perceived one of the few fleeting moments when agreement was just conceivable. He would certainly have cut away much of the "dead wood" and prevented the Conference becoming exhausted with the avalanche of side issues which made it all seem so hopeless.

At the January meeting of the Council the report of the Preparatory Commission was received. Dr. Curtius declared that Germany would not accept the Draft Convention as a basis of discussion when the Conference met and that she would again raise certain issues of particular importance to her. He further proposed a questionnaire to be issued to all States with a view to eliciting such searching information as the number of trained reserves and the amount of material that they had in reserve. As it was quite obvious that this would not be answered, the Council adopted the more practical proposal of the British Government, which had in fact been suggested by an officer working under me, that all States should fill in the tables attached to the Draft Convention with the figures of their existing forces. These at the time were quite unknown and would at least give a datum level from which increases or decreases could be calculated in a uniform manner. February 2nd, 1932, was fixed as the date for the opening of the Conference and all non-League States were invited. Geneva was fixed as the place for it to be held, in spite of attractive offers from Lausanne, Barcelona, Vienna, and Brussels.

At the Assembly in September Signor Grandi proposed that all States should agree to an Armaments Truce for one year which, by this act of international goodwill, would create a favourable atmosphere for the opening of the Conference. It was a sensible and broad-minded suggestion. It is hardly necessary to say that the hair-splitting fanatics and the definition maniacs got busy at once and every sort of quibble was raised as to its exact interpretation. Did it affect programmes already settled for the renewal and upkeep of material? What about increases in the annual contingent, which had already been provided for by legislation? What about unforeseen circumstances arising? I had the greatest difficulty in convincing our own War Office that it was not a trap and that it must be interpreted broadly. I gravely gave it as my opinion that the transfer of five anti-aircraft guns to Malta from England would not be a breach of the truce.

In the remaining twelve months the attitude of France, under the hostile influence of MM. Tardieu and Laval, began to harden. Briand's position had been much shaken as the result of events narrated in the last chapter and the proposed Austro-German Customs Union, which I will mention later, had turned public opinion against him still more. His policy had failed and he was old and disheartened. As a last desperate gambler's throw he stood for President of France on May 31st, 1931, and was badly beaten by M. Doumer. Poor Briand would never have gone to the poll had he not had sufficient promises of support to be sure of victory. It was believed that M. Tardieu and his following had given theirs to induce him to stand and had then voted for Doumer to bring about his humiliation.

Thereafter he was politically dead. I was near him at a Council meeting and was horrified to observe M. Francois-Poncet, then an Under-Secretary, pushing a separate typewritten sheet in front of him for every item on the Agenda and making sure that he read his brief and said nothing more. To think of Briand, who had been Foreign Minister since 1925, becoming a puppet in the hands of the Quai d'Orsay! M. Laval dismissed him in January, 1932, and he died two months later, on March 7th.

I have in other places tried to give some estimate of M. Briand's greatness. He had lived a tempestuous life in politics, having started, like most Frenchmen, on the Left, and he knew every move in the game. He was genially cynical on most subjects but he strove hard for peace. He had many enemies on the Right and the Press assailed him fiercely. I still preserve a paper in which there is an article on Briand written the day after his death, containing the most bitter hatred and the most scurrilous abuse that I have ever read in print.

He died among the smoking ruins of his own policy. Did he ever regret, as the shadows were falling, that he had not used a little more drive, more resolution, more fanaticism? I wonder. It was not in him perhaps to lead a forlorn hope. But Geneva will never be quite the same without that stooping, untidy figure, the eternal cigarette, the drooping moustache and fine head of hair, the slow enigmatic smile, the characteristic shrug of the shoulders and the beautiful, mellow voice.

The tide was running heavily against disarmament in France and on July 20th the French Government circulated a memorandum of an uncompromising character, which showed that they had not advanced an inch since 1924. As I read it, I remember feeling that all my

gloomiest forecasts were proving true and my observation of their tactics during the Preparatory Commission had been correct. They did not mean to disarm. If that memorandum was to remain the basis of their policy, there could be no hope of any sort for the Conference.

It stated that French armaments had already been reduced "to a level which appears to her strictly to represent the lowest point consistent with her national security, in the present state of Europe and the world." It also maintained that "the strict observance of the standards of forces laid down in the Peace Treaties was one of the prerequisites of the limitation of armaments." It laid emphasis once more upon "security" and a desire was expressed to return to the principles of the Protocol of 1924. In other words, the French conception of a Disarmament Convention was that France was to remain secure with her 561,000 effectives and her ample material, the *status quo* for her and her friends was to be preserved, and Germany was to remain disarmed.

The responsibility for this unbending attitude was placed on recent political events in Germany but to any one who had watched the French closely throughout the Preparatory Commission it went far deeper than that. The Germans reacted strongly and public opinion, stirred by the election successes of the Nazi Party, began to crystallise round the phrase "equality of rights." The line taken was that either France and others must come down to the existing German level or Germany must rise to theirs. They absolutely refused to tolerate a continuance of unilateral disarmament.

Great Britain was wholeheartedly behind the Conference. All over the country great meetings were held in support of disarmament and a national declaration was framed, which was subsequently circulated for

signature throughout the world and presented to the Conference. In Italy Signor Mussolini in a series of speeches and articles came out very strongly for drastic disarmament. The common people throughout the world were deeply anxious for the success of the Conference.

The Labour Government made a very interesting departure from precedent by forming a Three Party Committee to discuss the policy to be adopted at the Conference. It held ten long sessions and, though complete unanimity was not achieved, it adopted a series of resolutions which contained a statement of policy, even though some of them seemed to be rather contradictory!

The chief value of the Committee to my mind was that its members learnt for the first time what the real problems of disarmament were, both politically and technically. The whole defence policy of the Empire was examined in relation to the armaments of other Powers. I know that during the six weeks that the Committee was meeting I spent countless hours compiling most elaborate Appreciations and memoranda for them. Mr. Lloyd George was the most insatiable in his demands for information, though from his remarks at the meetings it was obvious that he rarely read them.

I attended some of the meetings and found them deeply interesting. It would be improper for me to reveal what passed there, but it was interesting to notice with what apprehension Mr. Lloyd George, then leader of a united Liberal Party, was regarded by the representatives of the Labour Government. They seemed to fear that he would lure them on to accept some moderate disarmament policy, such as the Departments were advising, and then come out far to the left of them with an extremely drastic and sensational one of his own, which would

completely cut the ground from under their feet. It was at this Committee that I saw Mr. Eden for the first time, acting with Sir Austen Chamberlain and Sir Samuel Hoare, as a representative of the Unionist Party. The Government were represented by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, Mr. Arthur Henderson and the Service Ministers, Mr. Tom Shaw, Mr. Alexander, and Lord Amulree. The Liberals were represented by Mr. Lloyd George, Lord Lothian and Sir Herbert Samuel. The anti-French bias of the two former was very noticeable.

I turn now to the proposed Austro-German Customs Union, which was perhaps the spark which set alight the whole train of political and financial disasters which took place during the following months.

Austria had been a hopeless economic unit ever since the Peace Treaty. It consisted of an Imperial capital with a territory quite inadequate to support it and with no economic hinterland. The adjacent States, fragments of the old Empire, had raised high tariff walls against her and she had only just been saved from Bolshevism and ruin by the financial reconstruction brought about by the League. But she was still a chronic invalid. Dr. Schober, the Foreign Minister at the time, had passed a blameless existence as an Austrian civil servant, was for some time Police President, and was exceedingly popular with the Police. He was a thoroughly honest man, though not conspicuously cut out for the subtleties of international affairs. He had the air of a prosperous business man with a round red face and short white beard. It always sounded odd to hear him addressing the Council in excellent English, a feat which was unusual for a Central European representative. He had for some time been conducting some very secret economic negotiations with Germany and, following a visit of Dr. Curtius to

Vienna, it was announced on March 21st that plans for a Customs Union between the two countries had been under discussion. The advantages to Austria were obvious but it was by no means so certain that Germany would be made any the happier politically by the incorporation of seven million people, the majority of whom were Catholics and Socialists. From an economic point of view Austria would hardly be an asset. Almost the sole attraction, except the sentimental one of race, was the potential value of more "cannon fodder."

Political Union or Anschluss had been forbidden no less in the Treaty of St. Germain than in the Treaty of Versailles. Austria had even more specifically undertaken in the Austrian Reconstruction Protocols of 1922 not to "violate her economic independence by granting to any State a special régime or exclusive advantages calculated to threaten this independence."

The excitement in Little Entente circles and in France was profound. They rejected the view that the Customs Union was innocuous and saw behind it the spectre of Political Union. On military grounds France and Italy were equally emphatic, the former objecting to a further increase in the adverse balance of population which would mean greater numerical inferiority, and the latter refusing to have Germany at the Brenner Pass. It was unfortunate for M. Briand's waning prestige in France that only a fortnight before the announcement he had declared in the Chamber that the danger of Anschluss had practically disappeared. Mr. Henderson, our Foreign Secretary, handled the situation prudently and informed the House of Commons that he proposed placing the matter on the agenda for the next meeting of the Council and would suggest there a reference as to its legality to the Permanent Court of International Justice.

This was all quite straightforward, but underground forces were at work which were destined to put a stranglehold on Germany and Austria. They were without a friend in Europe; defenceless from a military point of view and tottering upon the verge of a financial debacle. On May 11th, 1931, before the Council met, came the failure of the Austrian Bank, the Credit Anstalt, the largest financial house in Austria with world-wide connections and reputation. The Government of Austria and the house of Rothschild both came to the rescue, but the complete collapse of Austrian finance and the withdrawal of confidence in its stability could hardly be avoided. The suspicion grew almost into a certainty that the downfall of the Credit Anstalt had been brought about by French financial manœuvres. The Council met on May 19th and, after a polite debate, which barely concealed the passions seething beneath the surface, Mr. Henderson's resolution to refer the legality of the Union to the Permanent Court was adopted. I was present at the Council and was aghast at the feeling in the French and Little Entente delegations. They believed that they had now got Germany by the throat financially and her complete ruin was only a matter of weeks. Every string was being pulled to bring it about. Our Foreign Office and Treasury knew the situation; but seeing and talking to Mr. Henderson, I could not help asking myself whether he really appreciated the abyss that was yawning before us.

Behind the scenes the financial pressure on Austria continued with unabated ferocity. On June 16th the Bank of England came to the rescue of the Austrian National Bank with a loan of £4,000,000 in order to help the Austrian Government to resist the blackmail of the French banks to drop the Customs Union in return for a

loan. Behind them of course stood the French and Little Entente Governments. But our financial position was becoming so precarious that by August the Bank were unable to renew the loan. President Hoover's moratorium came on June 20th to save Germany for a short time, but its effect was largely destroyed by the French Government delaying for a fortnight to agree to it. France with her temporary prosperity and enormous gold reserve had replaced us as the greatest financial Power in Europe, and she used her temporary predominance to further her political ends with complete ruthlessness.

The screw upon Germany and Austria continued to be turned and by the end of August Austria was compelled to yield. It had been hoped that she could hold out until September 5th, the day on which the verdict of the Permanent Court was to be announced. This might have given her an honourable exit. On September 3rd, however, there was a meeting of Briand's European Union, and Dr. Schober and Dr. Curtius were forced to announce that, owing to the economic situation in Europe, they were compelled to withdraw their proposal for a Customs Union.

The final stage came two days later when the Permanent Court decided by 8 votes to 7 that the Customs Union was illegal. Both the majority and the minority published reports containing their reasons, each of which were supported by what were, no doubt, respectable juridical arguments. But the decision could hardly escape considerable criticism on the grounds of partiality and political bias. This becomes more apparent when the nationality of the judges on each side is considered. The majority report, which declared it illegal, was composed of the judges of Colombia, Cuba, France, Italy, Poland, Roumania, San Salvador and Spain. The seven

dissenting judges came from Belgium, China, Germany, Great Britain, Japan, Holland and the United States. It is repugnant to me to question the impartiality of a legal tribunal, particularly of this character. But one cannot be blind to the fact that, of the majority judges, four belonged to countries acutely interested in the verdict and three of the other four belonged to the Spanish-American bloc which usually acted with the French bloc at Geneva. Of the seven dissenting judges only one, the German, was politically interested, while the Belgian judge actually belonged to a country in close political relations with France.

I remember years before being told by a Minister of a certain State, when I was Military Attaché at the Hague, that a judge who belonged to his country was going to vote in a case then before the Court in a certain way. I asked him how he knew; he smiled at my innocence and said, "Of course we have talked it over and we have decided that the interests of my country dictate a vote on that side." I expressed my horror at such a cynical view of the duties of a judge. He replied, "You Anglo-Saxons are always so self-righteous about justice." This may have been an exceptional case but I can well believe that there are countries in the world that send judges to the Permanent Court whose standards are less high than our own. In cases which are acutely political, the strain becomes too great for the more pliable judges and justice is not always done. The prestige of the Permanent Court certainly suffered by their verdict.

There are many people in this country who believe in the possibility of an Equity Tribunal for the settlement of all international disputes. My experience leads me to doubt whether it will ever be possible to obtain international judges of sufficient prestige, who will not only

be impartial in cases where passion is running high but, what is much more difficult, be believed by the disputants to be so. It is not given to many countries to see, as we have seen, their judge in the Permanent Court voting against his country, when opinion is divided. The framers of the Covenant doubtless saw this difficulty and it was for that reason that they proposed that political disputes should go to the Council and that it should only be a mediatory body without the power of enforcing a verdict. Neither disputant is obliged to accept the Council's proposed settlement.

The Customs Union was involved in the whole financial crisis, to which I will now return. As I have already mentioned, President Hoover's moratorium proposal for debts and reparations saved Germany for the time being; but the fatal delay in its acceptance by France caused the drain on German credits to recommence and her situation once more became perilous.

On July 13th the Darmstädter Bank closed its doors and two days later the French banks began to withdraw their balances from London. The full significance of this step was not realised at the time by the public, which was absorbed in the German financial crisis. The Bank of England continued to lose gold and it was forced to seek loans in Paris and New York. On July 31st the May Committee Report was issued, which indicated a budget deficit of a £120,000,000 for the following year. This was one of the direct causes of our own financial disasters. Parliament adjourned and the damaging statements in the Report were left unanswered, while the world gained the impression that we were insolvent. Had a statement been issued simultaneously giving the steps that were being taken to restore the situation, the position might have been saved.

Things went from bad to worse and, with acute conflict inside the Labour Party as to whether and how "cuts" were to be applied, the fall of the Labour Government on August 24th was inevitable as they were dependent upon Liberal support. It is not my purpose to tell in detail the story of those dramatic days; it is sufficient to record that the King invited Mr. MacDonald, with whom the bulk of the Labour Party were in violent disagreement as to the policy to be followed, to form a National Government. The new Government introduced very drastic economies, and in the face of a deficit of £170,000,000 a supplementary budget, which would be balanced by economies and new taxation, was presented by Mr. Philip Snowden, who had remained Chancellor of the Exchequer. It was a courageous effort on the part of a people united in the presence of danger. But there was yet another disaster to come.

On September 15th the Admiralty announced the mutiny at Invergordon, which was due to over-drastic cuts in the rates of pay. It was more in the nature of a strike than active insubordination, but the gravity of it was undeniable. Its origin was not political, although a few bluejackets with Communistic leanings probably turned the unrest to good account. The best proof of this was that, following the announcement, the leaders of the Communist Party in London were all to be observed with suitcases in their hands taking the next train for Invergordon. They had been taken completely by surprise! The effect all over the world was immense. I was at Geneva at the time and the *Journal de Genève* published a leading article, which purported to sum up international opinion, to the effect that a week ago the three pillars of civilisation seemed to be the British Monarchy, the £1 sterling, and the British Navy. And in

a single night the world had observed two out of the three tottering to their fall. Our Navy was indeed the chief element of stability and power in a shaken world. Our own Press was moderate and brief, but it was my fate to read column after column of descriptive articles in the foreign Press expressing amazement and occasionally ill-concealed delight at our predicament. Much of the news was distorted and exaggerated, but even the truth was sufficient to destroy the last vestige of confidence in our ability to meet the crisis. French papers remarking that revolution always began in the Fleet and pointed to Russia and Germany as examples. The withdrawals of gold increased and five days later we were off the Gold Standard.

The new National Government had had no time to consider a League of Nations policy and had sent to the Assembly a non-party delegation consisting of Lord Cecil, Lord Astor and the Earl of Lytton, with Sir Arthur Salter, the economic expert, as one of the substitute delegates. On the Sunday evening (the 20th) we had received a telegram from the Government saying that we had gone off the Gold Standard and giving an able memorandum to be read on the following morning. I stood with Mr. Cadogan and Sir Arthur Salter on the landing of the Hotel Beau Rivage and discussed the situation. We asked Sir Arthur what it would all mean. "Would there be runs on the banks? Would the £1 go down to 10/-? Would the stock markets collapse?" To none of these questions could this great economist give any certain reply, for which in retrospect I can hardly blame him! To me, fed on the foreign Press and without any special financial or economic experience, it seemed almost the end of everything. The next morning I rang up my wife to say a few comforting words. I was much

cheered to find that she hardly seemed to understand my solicitude and told me that no one was at all excited!

On September 21st in the Economic and Financial Committee Sir Arthur Salter read the Government declaration, which was received with politeness and sympathy. No work was done in Geneva that day. It was particularly difficult for our little band of Englishmen to go about our business with apparent unconcern, realising only too well that, beneath their courteous bearing, the people we met were shrugging their shoulders and murmuring, "England is finished." One thought of the great empires of the past, Rome, Carthage, Spain, Russia, and wondered. Yet one felt that the same spirit that had faced greater dangers and overcome them would not forsake us now.

The British Dominions, except South Africa, and the Scandinavian States, followed us off the Gold Standard. The distress and anxiety became more and more acute throughout the world, the United States in particular plunging still deeper into the abyss. There was hardly a country except France that was not in difficulties.

To complete the tale of this *année terrible* I ought to mention two other incidents. On September 18th, two days before we went off the Gold Standard, the first shots were fired by Japanese troops along the South Manchurian railway, which were the signal for the long-prepared act of violence that absorbed a Chinese province. Some comments upon this will be found in another chapter.

On April 14th the King of Spain had quitted his throne and stolen away like a thief in the night. Not a single one of the three great buttresses of the Monarchy, the Army, the Church and the Aristocracy, drew a sword or said a mass to save him. Alone of all his countrymen, the Commander of the Spanish Foreign Legion had flown

from Morocco to tell the King that if he would permit him to bring the Spanish Foreign Legion over, which was standing ready to embark, he would save the throne. For three days the King toyed with the idea and then decided to leave quietly without any bloodshed. The royal guard walked out of the palace the moment he left, the troops in the adjoining barracks doing likewise. All night long the Queen and her children lay, heard the howls of the mob a few streets away, calling for death to the King and the Royal House. She sent to General Sanjurjo, commanding the Civil Guard, for some loyal men to protect her and after some delay he managed to produce seventy. Early the following morning she and her family were sent off by a train from a wayside station and out of all the grandees and courtiers only half a dozen faithful friends came to bid them farewell.

Such was the catastrophic position which was to usher in the Disarmament Conference. There had been no preliminary negotiations and below the surface a war had been going on, differing only from the real thing because it was fought with currencies and credits instead of bullets and bombs. The objective was the same, the destruction of a nation. It was most unfortunate that in this kind of war Great Britain, who has usually spoken the decisive word and kept the peace, was laid low by the same financial malady. International finance works in secret and the moves are known to few. It would be highly interesting to hear some day the true story, beginning with the Austro-German Customs Union and ending with our going off the Gold Standard.

During the Assembly there was much private talk in the lobbies about the hopeless outlook for the Conference; but nobody dare say anything in public and every speaker metaphorically laid his hand upon his heart and

declared that his country at least, whatever pessimism might exist elsewhere, would oppose any postponement. It was a curious lack of courage: if a Great Power had given the lead, the majority would have followed, except the ex-enemy States who, for obvious reasons, were determined that it should be held. It was another instance of the inability of any one at Geneva to say "No." Some tentative efforts were made at the eleventh hour through diplomatic channels and the slightly ridiculous hint was given to Germany that it would be a gentlemanly act on her part to suggest it. As she would be the country likely to gain more than any other by its meeting and, as her representatives had been pressing for years, with ever-increasing rudeness, for a date to be fixed, her reply may be imagined. I urged that the new Government, with all its prestige and with the nation behind it, should have the strength to speak out and tell the world that the moment was not propitious, but my advice was disregarded.

So far as I could see the elements of a successful issue of the Conference simply did not exist and it would have been wiser to recognise the fact. There is always the argument about not disappointing public opinion; but I did not think that it would be unreasonable if it were told the real truth. In any case disappointment at the beginning would have been far better than two years of ploughing the sands and achieving nothing except a still greater embitterment of international relations.

I have touched superficially upon the political crisis, which ended in the formation of the National Government, and I heard a good deal from both sides of what went on behind the scenes. Indeed, in a series of devastating broadcasts by Mr. Philip Snowden and replies by his opponents the substance of the debates in the Cabinet,

which are technically secret, were published to the world. I have no revelations to make, but I have talked the matter over many times with Mr. Henderson and I did at least hear his side of the case. I came to one fairly definite conclusion and this was that a number of the Labour Cabinet, and in these I include Mr. Henderson, did not fully understand the gravity and the complexity of the issues involved. There was no particular reason why they should. The Trade Union element in the Cabinet were able men with great gifts of character and organising ability, but the abstract questions about money, gold, currencies, inflation, credit and so on had been quite outside their life's experience. Consequently, when faced with a first-class financial crisis, the Treasury officials hardly succeeded in convincing them what would be the results of an unbalanced budget or the daily drain of gold. They were obsessed with the feeling that there was an attack upon the payments to the unemployed, a class which they felt particularly bound to protect, and they sincerely believed at the time the story spread that it was a "Bankers' Ramp." Even the May Committee's Report, which precipitated the crisis, failed to convince them. It is difficult, otherwise, to understand how they could be so complacent when they must have been aware of the terrible financial crises going on all over the world, to which I have already referred.

Mr. Henderson constantly said to me that he had not opposed unemployment cuts and had only insisted upon time for a further examination of the question. But there was no time to spare! Among the members of the National Government who came to Geneva at the beginning of the Conference feeling was extremely bitter against the Labour ex-Cabinet Ministers. They sincerely regarded them as unpatriotic and having deliberately let

the country down. The mutual hostility of the parties was reminiscent of the bygone days of Home Rule. There was considerable animosity towards Mr. Henderson and it made his task in the earlier part of the Conference extremely difficult. Personally I was convinced that he could never have knowingly been guilty of an unpatriotic act and, if he and others failed to face the situation, I believe it was because they did not fully understand it. The relationship between Mr. Henderson and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald had been difficult ever since they had been in the Labour Movement, of which they had been the chief founders. Temperamentally they were poles apart. I can well imagine how the subtlety of Mr. MacDonald jarred upon the slower-witted but shrewd Trade Unionist, who cared little about Karl Marx but was passionately in earnest about improving the conditions of the class from which he came.

Mr. Henderson had his own view of the events leading up to the fall of the MacDonald Government in 1931. It was his belief that for months earlier Mr. MacDonald had been working for a National Government and that in March an intermediary of his had attended a dinner given by a prominent Liberal peer, where Liberal and Conservative representatives discussed with him the possibilities of shaking off the Left Wing of Labour and forming a National Party. Curiously enough, the late Lord Thomson told me that he had acted as a "go-between" from Mr. Lloyd George to Mr. Ramsay MacDonald on a somewhat similar errand some years before—but this was to be an anti-Conservative coalition.

Another of Mr. Henderson's ideas was that the King had acted unconstitutionally in sending for Mr. MacDonald, after he had resigned, and asking him to form a new Government. The argument was that, as his Party

had left him, he represented no Party at all and that the King should have sent for the new leader of the Labour Party. Whatever may have been the correct constitutional procedure, upon which I am not qualified to express an opinion, I cannot see that it would have made any material difference except that the crisis would have been further prolonged. Labour had not a clear majority, and a new Labour Cabinet, if it had been formed, would have been compelled immediately to resign as the result of a defeat in the House of Commons.

Mr. Henderson left office after being Foreign Secretary for a little over two years. During that time his conduct of foreign affairs had gone well. In the Hague Conferences of 1929 and 1930, which brought about the Young Plan, and the Naval Conference he had no great share, but they were distinct successes for the diplomacy of the Government. The Egyptian negotiations, on the other hand, were conducted entirely by him and, though the 1930 discussions with Nahas Pasha failed, they were the basis of the Treaty that exists to-day. I was present at some of these discussions, as representing the War Office, and I respected his conciliatory attitude and his firmness. In the interests of his country there was a line beyond which he would not go and he never failed to say so with the greatest bluntness, even at the cost of breaking off the negotiations. In the European sphere he realised, I think, that he must remain on good terms with France. Peace was constantly in his mind and he certainly intended to press disarmament hard. If Labour had been in office when the Conference opened, I imagine that our offers of guaranteed security would have been lavish enough even to satisfy the French; but whether such a course would have been to the advantage of Great Britain is open to question. Mr. Henderson was a success

at Geneva, where his sincere belief in the League and his bluff frankness inspired respect.

His methods of work were peculiar. I believe that, as a rule, his secretaries had to read telegrams and despatches to him, as he would rarely read them himself. This must have been a very slow business and much of the real import of the documents must have been lost. I always had the impression—I dare say I was wrong—that he did not really know his subjects very well. It was the same with disarmament. On the other hand, he was a man of decision and once he had taken a line he stuck to it. He was genial by nature but apt to get irritable and shout at people, yet the Foreign Office loved him. It was a great romance to think of the man, who had started life as a moulder, sitting in the seat of Curzon, Salisbury, Palmerston and Castlereagh and guiding the foreign affairs of a great Empire. It was honourable alike to him, who had had the character and ability to gain such a position, and to the country, whose political system made it possible. He was a good Foreign Secretary, but history will hardly bear out the claim of his followers either that he was "the best Foreign Secretary England ever had," or that the deterioration in the international situation began with the disappearance of Mr. Henderson from the Foreign Office.

CHAPTER EIGHT

PREPARATIONS FOR THE CONFERENCE

Conference Preliminaries. Our own difficulties. The problem of France and Germany. The machinery of Government.

IN my description of the preliminary discussions about disarmament and the atmosphere surrounding them I have not left any doubt what my own views were as to the prospects of the Conference, which I recorded at the time. They were due not only to the apparently irreconcilable opinions upon the major questions in the Preparatory Commission and the unyielding temper of the principal delegates, but even more to the increasing political tension that the economic collapse and the disturbing situation in Germany had produced. One could not spend years at meetings of the Commission without noticing how quickly its atmosphere responded to the political barometer outside. Although the discussions were nominally on technical questions, it was in reality the political differences that created the deadlocks. The possible methods of disarmament had been fully explored, and two or three fair-minded men could easily have drafted a Convention which would have done rough justice to the needs of all the parties concerned. We who were in the Commission knew perfectly well what these were. In fact the British Delegation did so in March, 1933, in a desperate effort to save the Conference, and we actually filled in the figures for each State, without notable dissent from any quarter.

The fundamental obstacle was that anxiety for the immediate future was so great that the ultimate peace of the world was of less importance to most Governments

than the immediate military security of their frontiers and the retention of some strategical preponderance over their neighbours. In saying this I am not accusing the harassed statesmen of being indifferent to peace. Far from it. At that time, whatever may be the case now, I do not believe that any Government was thinking of aggression, if one excepts the military clique in Japan; and they all craved for the removal of the spectre of war. Their difficulty was that the very imminence of it made them afraid to sacrifice any fraction of their armaments in exchange for a problematical increase in security. It is doubtful whether the critics, without any responsibilities, who were so severe upon the failure of Governments to disarm would have acted differently, if they had been exposed to the same stresses and strains and knew the real situation as did the statesmen and General Staffs upon whom they directed their invective. I include General Staffs, because there is no greater illusion than that they are, as a whole, war-minded. I have known those of many countries intimately and I never discovered one who gloried in war or desired it. They know too much about it. If they believe in being strong, it is because they also believe that their armed strength may avert war: in contrast to the bloodthirsty pacifists who deny modern weapons to their armed forces but would urge their appearance on every battlefield in the world to help to resist aggression.

If anything that I have said carries conviction, it leads to the conclusion that it is not armaments that are the chief cause of war. The history of 1926-31 was not one of an armaments race or of excessive armaments but of a gradual deterioration of the international situation due to economic and political chaos, which in their turn made disarmament impossible and rearmament inevitable.

The course of events proved this with mathematical precision. The fact was that in promoting disarmament first we were beginning at the wrong end, and the French in continually hammering away at "security" were logically right. We tried to throw cold water on the French because their conception was a purely selfish one and because we did not want to undertake any further commitments. However, the disarmament boat had been launched on the water-chute and no power on earth could then arrest its course to the bottom.

The Secretariat of the League issued "a preliminary report on the work of the Conference" in November, 1935. It is a valuable document and, as might be expected from such a body, it is rigidly objective and historical rather than critical. It does, however, make some extremely significant observations.

It points out that in January, 1931, when the Council decided that the Conference should be held, eleven years had elapsed since the obligation to disarm in Article 8 of the Covenant had been accepted and it could hardly be maintained that the necessary technical preparations had not been made. It goes on to say:

"It may be questioned, however, whether when the Conference met early in 1932, there existed a minimum of conditions, political and moral, indispensable for ultimate success, or whether the political preparation of the Conference was adequate. . . .

"Unfortunately, owing to circumstances which it is not necessary here to recall, little or nothing was done in the year between the Convocation and the actual meeting of the Conference to obtain in advance some measure of agreement upon fundamental issues between the principally interested Powers and, when the Conference came together, none of the political difficulties fore-

shadowed during the proceedings of the Preparatory Commission had been solved. . . .

"The limitation of armaments, moreover, cannot be considered as an isolated problem. Disarmament is only one aspect of an organised peace system and experience in dealing with the problems before and during the Conference has clearly shown that an effort to limit and reduce armaments necessarily entails the discussion of much wider political problems."

These wise reflections were not hidden from the minds of those concerned with the decision, but no single statesman and no Government seemed able to break the vicious circle.

The contrast between the pessimism behind the scenes in all countries that knew the real situation and the enthusiasm of the peoples of the world was extraordinary. In every important country the churches and humanitarian associations were working and praying for the success of the Conference. In England—I speak for my own country—all that was best in our national life was wholeheartedly behind disarmament. There had grown up a loathing of war and a passionate desire for its suppression, which made the people extremely pacific and even markedly pacifist. There was an idealism about the movement with which Anglo-Saxons across the Atlantic were in close harmony. When the Conference met, a day was set apart for the ceremonial presentation of petitions organised by various groups and associations of all countries. These comprised about eight million signatures, over two million of which came from the United Kingdom. They were accompanied by various deputations; a particularly moving one was that representing an international ex-servicemen's association, consisting

of men blinded and crippled from war wounds. Lord Cecil and M. Emile Vandervelde, the Belgian Socialist and ex-Prime Minister, were prominent among the speakers, as well as a young American student who, on behalf of his generation, appealed to the Conference to spare it the horrors of another war. Not even the most hardened cynic could fail to have been affected by this episode and by the weight of world public opinion behind it.

I myself felt it deeply and, as I glanced round the hall and looked at the faces of the delegates, I wondered if any change of heart were possible. I studied particularly the fine, ascetic features of Dr. Brüning and the more hard-bitten countenance of M. Tardieu, in whose hands the success or failure of the Conference seemed to lie, and speculated whether the forces of the spirit in the two men could overcome the dead weight of passion, prejudice and nationalism mobilised behind them. I longed for some great orator to jump up immediately, while the impression remained, sweep the Conference off its feet and demand that a vow should be registered, there and then, to put nationalism behind it and to make the Conference a success. It was perhaps no more than a dream, for I reflected that great politicians, who listen to and themselves create mass emotion, are naturally less susceptible to its influence than simple people like myself, who are more rarely under its spell.

It was pathetic also to read the thousands of telegrams that poured into the office of our Delegation at Geneva, containing resolutions wishing the Conference success. They emanated alike from large and important bodies to humble mothers' meetings and branches of the League of Nations Union in small hamlets up and down the country. One felt almost a sense of shame that one was

taking part in a colossal make-believe, that the people had not been told the truth, for nothing but a miracle could bring success, and that all their high hopes would come to naught. Whatever excuses we might make, we could not at least complain that public opinion was not behind us.

There was a curious incident in connection with the petitions. Some time after Germany—then under Nazi control—left the Conference and the League, I heard accidentally that their Government had applied to the League for the return of the very extensive petitions that had been presented from Germany. When I expressed the opinion to my informant that, if they were returned, it would be a serious risk for the signatories, it was received with incredulity. I at once went off to see Mr. Henderson and at the same time sent a message to the Secretary General. I was glad to think that my intervention had assisted in some degree to save innocent people from concentration camps or worse.

Having made some reference to the international approach to the Conference I must now deal with some material difficulties with which we were confronted in the final preparations for the Conference.

Apart from our attitude to the Draft Convention, one of the most important matters for the Service Departments to consider was the figures that they would propose to the Cabinet for insertion in the Convention, under the three headings of men, material and expenditure. We laboured under a number of disadvantages, foremost among which was the famous "ten years" rule. In the early years after the War some genius had devised a formula, which was adopted by successive Cabinets, that the Service estimates should be based on the assumption that no major war was likely to take place for ten

years. However one looked at it, the idea was ridiculous. How could any body of men give what amounted to a guarantee of peace for such a length of time? One had only to look at the contrast between 1930 and 1935 to realise how rapidly the international situation might change.

Without any intermediate stages the rule was suddenly abolished two or three years ago and the Service Departments were left to face the situation as best they could. It is fair to say that the ten-year rule was only the expression of a profoundly pacific feeling in the country, which wished to forget about war altogether. My only complaint against the politicians of both parties is that they failed to take a long enough view. The statesmen who to-day so anxiously contemplate the perils of the situation till rearmament is complete can hardly be proud of that absurd formula to which they put their names. There is such a thing as leadership and responsibility, when ample warnings have been given. The country should not have been allowed to become so defenceless. It has crippled our diplomacy; it has involved enormous risks, of which one hardly cares to speak; it has necessitated great extravagance; and, incidentally, it hopelessly compromised our position at the Conference. Though much is now made of our gesture of unilateral disarmament, the annual cuts in the Service estimates were inspired by the need of more money for expanding social services rather than by any abstract devotion to the idea of disarmament. Other countries had been slowly building up their armaments after the War and by 1930 had reached the peak of what they could afford. Indeed, owing to the financial depression, they were beginning to reduce expenditure. Consequently, if by chance a general agreement could be reached upon some small measure of dis-

armament, it would fall in with the plans of most countries and they could take full credit for being willing to accept it. If, however, the fate of the Conference was to do no more than register stabilisation at existing levels, this also would not be in the least inconvenient. With ourselves and the Dominions it was quite otherwise. We simply could not afford to accept present figures and reduction was even less possible, unless the disarmament effected by other States were unexpectedly large. We had not built up to anything like the tonnage permitted under the Washington Treaty. It was true that other States had not done so either; but we could not renounce the right conferred by the Treaty, even if we did not exercise it. This represented a margin of very many millions of pounds per annum. The Air Force was notoriously under strength and even the modest programme of expansion had been continually postponed. We could hardly have claimed less than parity with the greatest air Powers. The Army had for years been living on its reserves; its equipment was out of date and there were formidable deficiencies. It was not in a condition to go to war at all. This being the state of affairs, we might be put into the position of having to ask for considerable margins above existing levels for all three Services.

Politically such a claim would obviously create considerable difficulties. We had continued to lecture other States for not disarming, all through the Preparatory Commission. We should no doubt continue to do so throughout the Conference. It would be a disagreeable surprise if, when the figures that each State proposed for itself were produced, it was found that we and the Dominions were practically alone in demanding increases. Parenthetically, I often used to wonder how the figures would be produced. Each State naturally would like to

see those of its neighbours before finally committing itself. The only solution I could think of was on the lines of a childish game called "Up Jenkins." The delegates would sit round a table and on the command of Mr. Henderson would raise their hands containing the figures and bang them down simultaneously, so that no State would get any prior information!

The politicians were fully aware of the dilemma that they had created by starving the Services but could see no real way out. Logically our case was sound enough, but a demand from us for unilateral rearmament would have caused howls of derision at Geneva. Fortunately we never came to the point of producing figures at all. If it had been necessary, I frankly do not know what line we should have taken.

The political side of disarmament also required very careful consideration. It was fairly obvious that, at the very beginning, we should be met by a demand from the French and their friends for some very firm guarantees of security, on the lines of the Protocol, and the extent of their disarmament, if any, would be measured exactly by the increased security forthcoming. Though there was a strong pro-French element in Whitehall, it did not extend to the general public and a Security Pact would hardly have been possible. What then were we going to do about the French? If we put all our money on them, rode rough-shod over the Germans and were prepared to hold them, by force if necessary, to the armaments of the Peace Treaty, it certainly was a clear-cut policy. But would our people back it; would the Germans in their desperate condition, with Hitler knocking at the door, accept a further riveting upon them of the fetters of Versailles? This line of thought seemed to lead to a speedy ending of the Conferences and ultimately to war.

An equally unanswerable question was "What were we going to do about the Germans?" The alternative of giving equality of security and of rights to Germany might have been the just course to take, but it could only end in a complete impasse. There was really no answer to either of these vital questions. The bold course would have been to bring France and Germany together in diplomatic discussions before the Conference met and try to establish some sort of basis of accord, even if we had to make some sacrifices; or, if that failed, to tell the world the truth, that the Conference was hopeless, and propose its postponement. But there was no one to do it; Mr. Henderson was the man chosen for the job, but he was no longer Foreign Secretary and was a very sick man. Sir John Simon, the new Foreign Secretary, had only taken over in November and had quite enough on his hands. He was not in any case the man for such an adventure. It was probable that, if the Conference survived, we might have to pay a certain price to France in giving some firmer guarantees of security; but it would have been foolish to produce them except at a late stage in the proceedings and as a *quid pro quo* for some measure of disarmament.

Thus it fell out that, what should have been a very strong hand to play, turned out to be the reverse. Other Powers were frankly bored when we talked about the amount of disarmament that we had carried out and were quite unable to understand how we could have placed ourselves in such a weak tactical position. They were certainly not disposed to help us to retrieve it. The French plainly told us that we had gone too far. At the same time they all expected to pin us down to firmer guarantees in the way of collective security than existed in the Covenant. We were further embarrassed

by a very large and earnest section of the population at home that was already demanding more sacrifices from us to ensure the success of the Conference. The slogan at the time was "to take risks for peace." It was difficult for the Cabinet to explain the realities of the situation in the state of public feeling at the time.

It will cause no surprise that we arrived at Geneva with somewhat nebulous instructions upon the critical questions. We were not unaccustomed to that. We frequently had none at all in the changing situations and had to make them up ourselves as we went along. I always understood that the French instructions, on the contrary, were usually worked out in great detail, covering every possible situation. Moreover they had a direct telephone line from Paris to their hotel, and every evening the chief delegate and the Service representatives had conversations with their respective departments as to the events of the day and the tactics to be observed on the following one. I was amused to learn from my American colleague that the Anglo-Saxon ran true to form and that their instructions were of the vaguest and frequently did not arrive at all.

I do not wish to convey that our administrative machine was so slipshod that the problems had not been considered. However languid might have been the Government's attitude to the Preparatory Commission, they were fully alive to the dangers and problems of the Conference and these were thoroughly discussed. One of the difficulties was that the men who had to decide were rarely confronted by the men who knew. Between the Service and Foreign Office representatives, who fully understood their subject, and the Cabinet Ministers there were links in the official hierarchy whose technical knowledge of disarmament was in inverse proportion

to their official status. We used to attend various Cabinet Committees but our views were very seldom invited and, though we drafted the departmental memoranda and talked to our own chiefs, it was not quite the same thing. Normally, Government decisions, as I saw it, are arrived at very quickly by men with first-class brains, political insight and a grasp of principles, who rely on the permanent officials to fill in the gaps. It is indeed, under the strain of modern administration, the only way by which government can be carried on at all. But disarmament was a peculiar subject of immense ramifications and normal methods were insufficient. Decisions and instructions were frequently incorrect and inopportune through sheer ignorance. Lord Cecil and Mr. Eden seemed to me to be the only Ministers who ever knew the subject thoroughly, though Sir John Simon was very good when he applied his brilliant intellect to it. But it was in fact a whole-time job, which was only realised by the Cabinet after the Conference had been sitting for six months or more, when Sir John Simon asked Mr. Eden, then Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, if he would undertake it.

Here I would like to make a brief digression upon the Government machine, for it seems to me that life is now so complicated that it has almost broken down. We may envy in this respect the totalitarian States, where immediate decisions can be obtained. The value of this in war-time is incalculable. One has only to be with a Cabinet Minister shortly before he goes to a Cabinet meeting or to the Committee of Imperial Defence and to see the agenda to realise the position. He has in front of him a pile of Cabinet papers, at times perhaps two inches thick. Some of them may only have reached him the previous afternoon. The agenda embraces important

questions arising all over the world as well as, in the case of the Cabinet, questions governed by party politics. Few Cabinet Ministers have time to glance at more than a small portion of the papers, except where their own departments are affected; they are then supplied with a highly-summarised "brief" containing the essence of the arguments and a suggested policy. Adequate study of the papers would take several hours.

I once said to a Cabinet Minister, "I wonder how you can sleep at nights. You go into the Cabinet, probably without reading half the papers, and you are confronted with an agenda, a number of items of which may affect the national interest for years, and the majority are disposed of with extreme rapidity. Don't you ever worry as to the results of your decisions?" "There is no time for that," he said; "it is a case of hit or miss. If it succeeds, well and good. If it is a miss, you just shrug your shoulders and go on to the next. You can't afford to look back." It should be remembered that in pre-war days the Cabinet usually met once a week. Now it may meet, in time of crisis, two or three times a week: sometimes on Saturdays or Sundays. In addition to all this the Minister has his departmental work, which may be heavy. Unless he is in the House of Lords, he has to take a share in the debates in the House of Commons and there are constantly public speeches to be made in the country and public functions to attend. There are frequent Cabinet Committees and Sub-Committees of the Committee of Imperial Defence. There were, I believe, about fifty of the latter in existence when I was in official life; there are probably a great deal more now. Government departments are extraordinarily efficient but I cannot but feel that the limit has been reached in "devilling" and condensation. The political chief must understand the major

points and the arguments, particularly if his department is at variance with another and the case has been put to the Cabinet for decision. The extent to which Ministers are supplied with public and Parliamentary speeches was a revelation to me and nothing is undone that can help them to get through the day. But we are reaching the dangerous position when the men who have to make a decision no longer have the time to consider the issues involved. The Hoare-Laval proposals were a clear case of the Government machine breaking down, and there must be others which receive less publicity. How a Minister has any time to be with his family, to read books, to relax or to take exercise, I have no idea.

The co-ordination is as perfect as that great public servant, Sir Maurice Hankey, can make it and, if it is breaking down, it is because there is, even to supermen, a limit to human endeavour. And Cabinet Ministers are not by any means all of that calibre. When one looks at France one might be tempted to think that they are in a far worse condition, with Governments that have a life of about four to six months. The ever-continuing political crises naturally absorb a good deal of the Ministers' time and few can learn anything about their departments before they are out of office. Apart from internal politics, the administration of the country must largely be in the hands of the civil servants. If the day ever comes when there is to be a struggle between Western democracies and the totalitarian States, some solution of the problem of government will have to be found unless the former are to start under a very great handicap. I see no particular virtue in a Cabinet of twenty-three members. It must be inefficient and satisfies no genuine democratic principles. It is not essential that the Minister of Transport or the Minister of Health

should pronounce upon the defences of Singapore or that the Foreign Secretary should have to consider factory legislation. So long as there is a small Cabinet responsible to Parliament and dependent upon the electorate, it should suffice. It may be something like the War Cabinet or Lord Haldane's idea of grouped Ministries, but I have no precise scheme to suggest. There would be a vast amount of opposition to any radical change but I am satisfied that there will have to be drastic alterations since Cabinet government, as we understand it to-day, is hopelessly overloaded and cannot act quickly enough in an age of speed and rapid decisions.

CHAPTER NINE

DIFFERING POINTS OF VIEW

The Conference opens. The views of the different States. The technical commissions. Qualitative Disarmament. Delay and lack of direction.

EVERYTHING possible had been done by the City of Geneva to cater materially for the delegates. A prominent citizen had received almost dictatorial powers to fix prices and to schedule accommodation. Two new hotels were built and a temporary Conference building with excellent accommodation was provided alongside the Secretariat building at the cost of the city. Including delegations, Press and spectators it had been estimated that there would be 3000 visitors to Geneva, though it may be doubted whether so many materialised. The glamour of the earlier Assemblies returned, Geneva was gay with bunting, and there was again the feeling that it was the centre of world events.

Most of the more important countries were represented by their Prime Minister or Foreign Minister. For the Great Powers there came M. Tardieu, the Prime Minister of France, accompanied by M. Paul-Boncour; Dr. Brüning, the Chancellor, with Herr Nadolny for Germany; Signor Grandi, Foreign Minister of Italy; M. Litvinoff, Commissar for Foreign Affairs, and M. Lunarchavsky for the U.S.S.R.; Viscount Matsudaira for Japan; and Mr. Hugh Gibson for the U.S.A.

The British Delegation nominally consisted of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, the Prime Minister; Sir John Simon, Foreign Secretary; the three Service Ministers, Lord Hailsham, Lord Londonderry and Sir Bolton Eyres Monsell; Mr. J. H. Thomas, Secretary of State for the

Dominions, and Sir Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India. Actually they were never all present at the same time and the Prime Minister only appeared occasionally for a few days at a time. The brunt of the work was borne by Sir John Simon, who was overloaded. Sometimes another Secretary of State or Under-Secretary deputised for him. The great weakness was that there was little continuity, for Sir John Simon was constantly going home and thought nothing of travelling to and from Geneva twice in a week. There were of course the debates on Manchuria to attend as well. Mr. J. H. Thomas was nominally there for liaison with the Dominions, but actually his rôle was that of the very private and personal representative of the Prime Minister and in that capacity to smooth over differences that might arise between the Foreign Secretary and the Service Ministers. He stayed for the opening few days of the Conference and the Service Ministers only came out later on, when their own Departments were much involved. I thought Mr. Thomas a very likeable man with immense vitality. He was a popular figure except perhaps with the Dominions, whom I do not think he ever understood. They resented what they thought was his bluffing and were not amused by his stories. He struck me as being extremely shrewd and, in a certain way, an excellent diplomatist. Apart from his long and successful career as a Trade Unionist, I should have thought that there was little or no Socialism in his composition. He stood in closer and more confidential relationship to Mr. Ramsay MacDonald than any other Minister. They were poles apart in character and yet in some way he gave something to Mr. MacDonald that he needed. If he ever opened his heart to any one in political life, I think it must have been to Mr. Thomas.

Lord Londonderry used to be frequently at Geneva,

occasionally acting as Minister in charge in the absence of Sir John Simon, and I think he enjoyed it. He was very pleasant to work with, and foreigners liked him, not least for the suggestion of the old traditions of diplomacy and his descent from Lord Castlereagh. He certainly looked the part.

He used to come to Geneva in an Air Force bomber of large size, escorted by two others. As their future existence was the subject of lively discussion the method of transport caused some comment. The picture only required to be complete for Lord Hailsham to drive up to the Conference building in a tank, an equally suspect means of transport!

I do not think that Lord Londonderry had a very easy time. His loyalty to the policy of the Air Ministry must surely have sometimes been in conflict with his judgment as a politician and a man. At one time it was thought that he would get the Paris Embassy, an appointment which would have been popular with the French; but I suppose he preferred the reverses and prizes that public life distributes with impartial hand.

The delegates were completed by the presence of a lady, Mrs. Corbett-Ashby, who represented admirably the women of Great Britain. A few other delegations also brought lady delegates at the beginning. I understand that the sex prefer "woman" to "lady." I merely use the nomenclature in vogue at Geneva. Theoretically women have just as much interest in disarmament as men, but practically the experiment did not work particularly well as it is difficult for them to take part in technical discussions, and they have no official responsibility. I brought with me Colonel (now Major-General) Alan Dawnay and Major Brian Robertson, who were employed under me in the General Staff at the

War Office and had been engaged on the preliminary disarmament work, in addition to their duties in the Military Intelligence Department. I owe them both a great debt of gratitude. I was also much indebted to Lieutenant Colonel G. F. Drew, who was invaluable at the War Office end. When I looked round at the other delegations and found the Japanese with fourteen army officers, and many others with numbers ranging from six to nine, I was astonished at our moderation. We were at times seriously overworked and it caused me some amusement to hear that Lord Hailsham, on returning to London from à week-end joy ride at Geneva—his only appearance—had informed my official chiefs that we were overstaffed. The Naval and Air sections, headed by Vice-Admiral Dudley Pound (now commanding the Mediterranean Fleet) and Group Captain J. Babington, respectively, were on an equally modest scale. Mr. A. Cadogan, with a small team from the Foreign Office, was the Secretary General of the Delegation, which was completed by Mr. F. Lyon of the War Office as financial expert, and representatives from the Dominions office. The Dominions were usually represented by their High Commissioners, though Sir George Perley was a Canadian Minister. The Aga Khan was an impressive Chief delegate from India. Discussions with the Dominions were frequent and cordial. Our problems were similar, for we were alone in having reduced our forces and, except in minor questions, our views were identical.

At 4.30 p.m. on February 2nd, 1932, the great World Conference of sixty-one sovereign States assembled at Geneva. The atmosphere was tense with anxiety and pessimism and, as the delegates filed into their places for the opening speeches, one almost seemed to hear the muffled booming of Japanese guns at Shanghai and the

crash of their air bombs over Chapei, where thousands of unoffending Chinese men, women, and children were being sent to their doom, as a prelude to a new era of peace on earth. The time of the session had actually to be postponed for an hour to permit of an emergency meeting of the Council to deal with the dangerous situation that had arisen at Shanghai.

The opening address was delivered by Mr. Henderson, the President of the Conference, which then adjourned until February 8th.

The Conference, when it reassembled, decided to constitute itself as a General Commission for working purposes, and, when this met, five special Commissions were also set up: the Land, Naval, Air, National Defence Expenditure and Political. Once the general discussion was over the Conference, as such, never met again. The French and their friends, having failed to secure either of their nominees as President of the Conference, were anxious for a substantial share in its control. It began to be rumoured that Mr. Henderson would be too busy with his Presidential work to preside over the General Commission, and that M. Politis would be a suitable choice. This would have completely shelved Mr. Henderson, as all the work was done by the latter body. He smelt a rat, however, in the proposal and absolutely declined to give way. M. Politis received the consolation prize of Vice-President and M. Benes, their other candidate, was elected rapporteur. These were certainly key positions for influencing the business of the Conference, but Mr. Henderson kept it very much in his own hands, while leaning heavily upon Sir Eric Drummond for counsel. M. Aghnides, the accomplished head of the Disarmament Section of the Secretariat, acted as Secretary to the Conference in Sir Eric's absence

and his devotion and loyalty to Mr. Henderson were of great assistance in his heavy task.

On February 8th the general discussion opened and lasted until February 24th. After all these years of waiting the various States had at last to come out in the open and declare what they had to contribute to the cause which they had come from the ends of the earth to promote.

It was a tradition at Geneva that the rôle of being the first speaker was shunned just as much as the first "turn" at a music-hall. It was felt that the audience was not yet keyed up and that the turn was likely to fall flat. For some reason or other Sir John Simon had been induced to accept the position and he delivered the first speech with his accustomed distinction. There was nothing very novel in his speech as it was not considered good policy for us to undertake any new commitments at the very beginning of the Conference. There would be a good deal of hard bargaining later on and it was prudent to keep something up our sleeve. On behalf of the Government he said that he accepted the draft Convention of the Preparatory Commission as a basis of discussion, and, while making as much play as possible with our previous reductions, he said that we were quite ready to join in an all-round reduction of armaments by international agreement. The Government was in favour both of qualitative and quantitative disarmament. These phrases, which had the advantage of being the same in English as in French, meant in the one case a reduction in the size and, by implication, the offensive quality of weapons and ships, and in the other the reduction in quantity both of men and material. They became part of the jargon of the Conference. He specially mentioned the prohibition of gas warfare, the complete abolition of submarines and the reduction in the size

of capital ships, as well as the abolition of heavy artillery which had a distinctly offensive character. No mention was made of tanks or of bombing aeroplanes, but he added that his list was by no means exhaustive. It will be observed that, except for the reference to heavy guns, he had mentioned nothing that had not previously been included in the declared aims of Government policy. On the question of effectives he could afford to let himself go. He mentioned our own desire for the abolition of conscription, which would solve the whole land disarmament question, and regretted that it was unlikely to prove acceptable, but he urged the limitation and reduction of the numbers of effectives. It was a constructive speech and he could hardly have said more than he did at that stage.

It was curious that the speakers who followed him nearly all concentrated upon the question of qualitative disarmament. It was valuable as tending to reduce the power of the offensive which the heavier weapons did so much to increase, and thus an aggression would become proportionately more difficult. If indeed all forces could be reduced to a defensive level the problem of security would be practically solved. Yet qualitative disarmament could only be complementary to, and not a substitute for, quantitative measures. The main purpose for which the Conference had met was to agree to figures of effectives, material and expenditure to be allotted to each country. One could only assume that the delegates in their speeches were playing for time and confining their speeches to a side of disarmament which committed them to nothing. There was almost complete agreement about abolishing the bomber. A large number of the smaller Powers also were in favour of abolishing the capital ship and the aircraft carrier. One could quite

understand their views. They looked upon the Conference as a great opportunity for reducing the armed strength of the Great Powers, and the more effectively it was done the greater became their own powers of defence and security.

The group of ex-enemy States, as was only to be expected, confined themselves to urging the principle of equality of rights. They professed to be indifferent as to whether other States reduced their armaments or their armaments were increased, but they demanded that there should be no further discrimination between the victors and the vanquished of the Great War.

The French group, as might be expected, had a very different policy to put before the Conference. There was a great deal more cohesion about them at that time than there is to-day. The Little Entente and Belgium were in very close relations with France. Poland was rather more independent but could be trusted on important occasions to obey the crack of the French whip. M. Tardieu had come armed with a very elaborate "Plan" and was anxious to get the greatest possible credit for it both at home, where there would be a General Election in May, and abroad. Fearing that he might be forestalled by some other plan, he circulated it to the Conference on February 5th before the general discussion began. A further point in his tactics was to try to focus discussion upon "security" first and to relegate disarmament to the background, which was in accordance with the French thesis that one could not discuss the latter until one knew what increase in the former one was likely to receive. One was bound to recognise the logic of this procedure. His speech contained a number of references to the "Plan," but the odd part about both of them was that there was no reference to disarmament. M. Laval,

speaking in the Chamber in January, had stated that the Government policy would be based on the memorandum of July of the previous year, described in Chapter Seven, which clearly indicated that they did not mean to disarm at all.

To those who have followed my previous description of French ideas of "security," many of the features of the Tardieu plan will not cause surprise. The essence of it was a guaranteed security on a firmer basis than the Covenant provided, the formation of an International Force on somewhat complicated lines and the internationalisation of civil aviation.

The force was to consist chiefly of the heaviest types of aeroplanes both military and civil, which were to be directly under the League, and secondly, naval, military and air contingents of the Signatory Powers were to be available for immediate service when called upon by the Council. The heavier types of material were to be exclusively reserved for these contingents. As regards the political provisions without which the other proposals would be "ineffective and unthinkable," we were told that "concrete proposals" were to be submitted later. Some headings, however, were given: "compulsory arbitration; definition of the aggressor; guarantees as to the rapidity of the decision of the authority controlling the International Force; and the international control of the execution of all agreements concerning armaments."

Although other speakers politely promised to review the "Plan" carefully, the opposition in the lobbies, in the Press and in private conversation, made it clear that the proposals were quite unacceptable to many important States. M. Tardieu must really have been riding for a fall. Its rejection would, he calculated, enable him to say

"I brought you my Plan; you rejected it completely. I can do no more, and if the Conference fails the fault will not be mine." The Plan was never, in fact, discussed at all. Manœuvring for position at Geneva takes place under the guise of apparently formal debates on procedure. The French were unable to force priority for a meeting of the Political Commission for the discussion of their Plan, and as the opposition to it steadily mounted it was finally dropped entirely. It failed to gain the support of a single Great Power and M. Litvinoff criticised it unmercifully.

To return to the opening speeches, Mr. Gibson of the United States delegation made a speech on very much the same lines as Sir John Simon. Dr. Brüning, who was received with the greatest cordiality, presented the German case in very moderate terms, and as regards equality of rights he asked for its concession in principle but he was prepared to accept no more than an instalment provided that the other Great Powers would make some real advance in disarmament. Later on Herr Nadolny, their permanent delegate, in another speech, vied with Signor Grandi in making most radical proposals for a clean sweep of all weapons prohibited by the Treaty of Versailles.

M. Litvinoff, though time had mellowed the aggressiveness of his attack, made one of his familiar speeches. When he reiterated the Soviet proposals for complete and absolute disarmament, to the great amusement of the other delegates, his sense of humour caused him to join heartily in their laughter!

The great majority of the other States made their contributions to the general discussion either by speeches or by written proposals. The veterans of the Preparatory Commission knew tolerably well how far each State was

likely to go and the debate proceeded on the expected lines.

The main tendency was to concentrate upon qualitative disarmament and, if a vote had been taken on February 24th when the general discussion finished, the French and their friends could hardly have prevented a sweeping prohibition of all kinds of offensive weapons. It is fair to say that, though they were against their abolition, they wished to place them in the hands of the League. Mr. Henderson made an optimistic speech underlining the points of agreement, but admitted that the future work would be "long and difficult." The fact was that the speeches had been to a large extent window-dressing and below the surface the old difficulties remained.

When the General Commission met we began to hear it whispered in the lobbies that the Conference must go slow owing to the number of forthcoming elections. The German Presidential Election had taken place on March 13th but a second ballot was necessary on April 10th. The French elections were due in May and the American Presidential Election was to take place in the summer. But if the Conference was to mark time whenever important general elections were pending there would never be any progress at all. It became clear, behind all the speeches and the camouflage, that the directing minds of the Conference intended to try to keep up appearances by giving the technical Commissions something to do until June at least. They then seemed to hope that, after the elections, something might turn up, though nobody quite knew what. After adopting an agenda of 104 items prepared by M. Benes, the rapporteur, the General Commission adjourned from the 3rd to the 11th March to allow the Assembly to discuss the

Manchurian crisis. On March 19th it adjourned again for an Easter recess of three weeks.

The Conference was simply drifting; there was no leadership, no plan, no attempt to force the issues: every possible opportunity was taken of wasting time, of adjourning and of prolonging academic discussion. Every one was sick of the technicalities of disarmament, which had been discussed for seven years. What was required was political agreement and negotiation for figures of limitation, but of these vital questions nothing was ever heard. M. Benes' agenda was a case in point. It did almost as much to wreck the Conference as any single step taken at Geneva. Happily it died a natural death in the course of a few weeks.

After M. Tardieu had been worsted in his struggle to get his plan discussed, opinion had definitely crystallised round the task which the technical Commissions were to be asked to perform. The subject chosen was qualitative disarmament. The Commissions were asked on April 26th by a resolution of the General Commission "to select those weapons whose character is the most specifically offensive or those most efficacious against national defence or most threatening to civilians." Sir John Simon had taken an active part in preparing this resolution and it was drafted in good faith. But to any one more accustomed to Geneva it was apparent that its terms were dangerously wide, particularly for a technical Commission. I had been through it all before and I foresaw that we should spend weeks in fruitless discussion. I pressed that the questions should be absolutely specific. But my advice was not heeded. Mr. Gibson, who understood the realities, had moved such a resolution in the General Commission "To request the Land Commission to draw up a plan for scrapping tanks and

mobile guns over 155 m.m. in calibre. . . ." But M. Tardieu, who feared that qualitative disarmament might commit them to piecemeal reductions before their security plan was discussed, succeeded in blocking it. For good or evil, however, the Conference had now decided to explore the possibilities of qualitative disarmament, in the hope of a solution, and the next word lay with the technical commissions. Pending their reports the General Commission decided to adjourn. Mr. Henderson had said on April 26th that we had reached "one of the decisive stages of our work," but there was little justification for this hopeful utterance.

I should like to break a lance on behalf of the so-called technical experts. I say "so-called," for there is an arrogance about the term that I personally detest. I have never regarded myself as an expert at anything in my life, and I strongly objected in my middle age to sailing under such false colours. The word implies a fixity of outlook which seems to deny the ability to see more than one side of a problem, and assumes an encyclopædic knowledge to which, in spite of thirty-two years' devotion to the profession of arms, I never dreamed of laying claim. When the politicians were confronted with an insoluble problem or wished to waste time, the invariable device was to appoint a technical committee. Some of these same politicians, being fully aware of the instructions given to their own military advisers, would then at a later stage proceed to be sarcastic at their expense for failing to reach an agreement which they themselves were quite incapable of achieving. Inspired by this lead, the Press would then join in the chorus and public opinion would seriously believe that the only obstacle to disarmament was the intransigence and professional bias of the technical experts.

Sir John Simon on one occasion amused the Conference with some good-humoured banter by quoting the definition of an expert as "one who knows more and more about less and less." I do not pretend that the reports of the Commissions were satisfactory documents, but the fault lay with those who had assigned to them an impossible task. Regarded as a time-wasting device, their success was staggering, since the whole of May and part of June were devoted to the work. But as any contribution to disarmament they were doomed to sterility from the very beginning.

The battles of "offensive" and "defensive" armaments in the Land, Naval and Air Commissions were all fought on somewhat similar lines. There was little pretence of objectivity. Each State tried to attach a "defensive" label to the weapons or vessels most suited to their own needs and an "offensive" one to those in which they were not interested or actively disliked. The ex-enemy States, headed by Germany, thought that it would be very astute to maintain that all armaments forbidden to them by the Peace Treaties were offensive. The argument was based on a fallacy. The types of arms had been forbidden not so much because they were offensive in character but to ensure that the ex-enemy States should be in a position of permanent military inferiority. In the Naval Commission, the British and the United States representatives urged that the battleship was defensive; indeed the former lyrically declared that its price was above rubies, while the submarine was alleged to be the only specifically offensive vessel. Japan considered that both were defensive but wished to call aircraft carriers offensive, as she notoriously fears air bombardment. The Germans made their point about vessels forbidden to them by treaty but wished a special exception made in favour of "the pocket

battleship," a vessel of 10,000 tons which they had ingeniously constructed, nominally without infringing the provisions of the Peace Treaty. The French and the Italians considered the submarine defensive, in which all the small Powers concurred. It seemed a fair contention that the small coastal submarine could be described as defensive in the hands of small Powers. This brief description of the attitudes adopted reveals the futility of the discussions and the self-interest by which they were inspired. Yet each representative was no doubt conscientiously following the instructions he had received from his Government. For instance, the three great naval Powers had determined to resist the abolition of battleships. It was obvious that, as the tide in the Conference was then running, their inclusion as "offensive" would imperil their future existence. Arguments had consequently to be found to prove that they were defensive. The Naval report merely recorded the differing points of view and gave no guidance to the Conference. To a landsman it appeared that battleships and battle cruisers over 10,000 tons and long range submarines could at least have been classified as offensive.

In the Land Commission discussion raged chiefly round the tank and the heavy gun. The French and their friends, supported by the Japanese, came off with the first prize by declaring that tanks under 70 tons and guns under 240 m.m. (9.5-inch) were defensive weapons. There were strong rumours that the French and the Japanese had made a bargain over disarmament; the Japanese were to secure a free hand in Manchuria in return for firm support in preventing any disarmament. I may say that the Japanese loyally fulfilled their share of the bargain! Technically the discussions were interesting. The main test that we endeavoured to apply

to the gun was its ability to breach permanent fortifications. There was room for differences of opinion but, apart from the French and Japanese, the great majority followed our lead in declaring that this could be done by a gun over 6 inches in calibre and this would constitute an offensive type. There was a minority of the ex-enemy States and some of the smaller Powers that wanted to draw the line at 105 m.m. (4.2-inch) but such a gun does not in fact throw a heavy enough shell. Unanimity could not be obtained, but it was clear what the opinion of the majority was. The difficulty of classification is that the offensive character comes much more from the method of employment than from the calibre, and this holds good with nearly all weapons. Very heavy guns can be used in land and coastal fortifications but they cannot be described as offensive. A further complication arises from the fact that coastal guns have to engage ships and they cannot be reduced below the calibre of naval guns. If, however, 14-inch guns are to be permitted in coast defences while armies are only allowed 6-inch guns, what is to prevent the heavy guns being taken from the coast defences, placed on mobile carriages and used in the field, as happened in 1914? Artificial restrictions are apt to break down in war when the guns are actually available. The maddening thing about land disarmament is that, whatever proposals are made, it is nearly always possible for ingenious minds to discover almost unsurmountable difficulties in making them effective, as for instance in this particular case of limiting the size of guns.

When tanks were discussed, opinion was more one-sided. The vast majority of the Commission at that time possessed few tanks and were consequently in favour of their abolition. On the extreme "right" were to be

found the French, the Little Entente and the Japanese. They insisted that the 70-ton tank, of which the French had two or three, was a defensive weapon. They asserted that no tank below 70 tons was capable of breaking through permanent fortifications. The argument was a specious one; it would be difficult to persuade the man in the street, who had experience of war, that a tank of 60 tons was a defensive weapon. The French were somewhat embarrassed in their arguments about the defensive character of tanks by the fact that they had christened the new invention "char d'assaut." The hasty change during the Conference to "char de combat" came too late to save their reputation for logic. Midway between the two extremes were the United States, the Dominions and ourselves, whose case was that neither the light tank of 6 to 7 tons nor the medium tank of 16 to 20 tons were essentially offensive. There was little real discussion. Each State tried to keep what it had and prohibit what it lacked.

Looking back on it all, I think we should have been prepared to give up the medium tank in the general interest and concentrate upon retaining the light tank as a weapon of defence. In our army we wanted tanks to compensate for our lack of numbers and our military strength would not in any case be a menace to other nations. In 1922 we had reduced our small army of 1914 by nine cavalry regiments, sixty-one batteries and companies of artillery, twenty-two companies of engineers, and twenty-one battalions of infantry. It was asking too much of us to give up tanks completely owing to some theories about offensive armaments. As with guns, the report of the Commission was completely indecisive and did no more than state the points of view. There was, however, ample material for forming the conclusion

that a limit of 6-inch guns and 7-ton tanks would have satisfied the majority.

The report of the Air Commission consisted of a series of platitudes, accompanied by a number of reservations, such as "All air armaments could be used to some extent for offensive purposes." "Air bombardment was a grave threat to civilians." "Civil aircraft could in varying degrees subserve military ends." They were unable to arrive at any conclusion about the internationalisation of civil aviation and the discussion upon this dragged on intermittently for over a year without result. I will refer to this and to the whole question of the air at a later stage. The air report was little more conclusive than the other two, but the conclusion that the bombing aeroplane was definitely an offensive weapon could hardly be escaped. The Air Commission finally reported on July 10th, though the other two had finished a month earlier.

The result of these Commissions, as I have already said, was indecisive and disappointing. They represented the first phase of the Conference, the move towards qualitative disarmament. The ground at any rate had been thoroughly examined and there was now no doubt that a Convention must include some reduction in the most offensive armaments. It should not be forgotten, however, that even if the armed forces of all States had been equipped with the weapons of the South African War period, they would have been no less capable of waging war against each other. The necessity for quantitative reduction remained and the problem of reconciling French "security" with German equality still dominated the Conference.

At the risk of wearying the reader with detail, I must mention that two other Commissions, the Chemical

Warfare and the Defence Expenditure, met during this period. The former was remarkable as being the only one ever appointed by the Conference that conducted their business in an impartial and scientific spirit, untinged by politics or national passions. The Commission was assisted by two eminent scientists in the French and British delegations and produced a unanimous report. This formed the basis of the chapter on Chemical Warfare which was incorporated in the British Draft Convention in March, 1933. It proved generally acceptable, though not going far enough in the direction of supervision and sanctions for some delegations.

The Defence Expenditure Commission, though not entirely unmoved by political feeling, also did some extremely valuable work and succeeded in solving a difficult problem. A former Committee during the Preparatory Commission had come to the conclusion that, if there was to be budgetary limitation, it was essential that each country should publish a simple statement of its defence expenditure under certain headings in a model form, which would itself have to be reconciled with the estimates presented to the Parliament concerned. The financial experts seemed to think that there would be little opportunity for much concealment of expenditure so long as the practice of presenting detailed estimates to Parliament, which prevails in constitutional countries, continued, and they were audited by an Auditor General, independent of the executive. Unfortunately, since these conclusions were arrived at, there have been many political changes and budgets in many countries are secret and no longer subject to any constitutional checks.

The whole story of this investigation is a long and severely technical one but it may be summed up by saying

that the Commission unanimously agreed that publicity of expenditure in a model form was perfectly feasible and could be checked by documents. They drafted articles for this purpose, which are now available for incorporation in a Convention. The question of actual limitation of defence expenditure is a much more complicated matter and there was considerable difference of opinion on this point. Among many other cogent objections was the fact that a number of countries had not published their closed accounts for many years. France for instance had not done so since 1924. There could be no check that a figure of limitation had not been exceeded if the money actually expended in a given year was unknown. Estimates are only forecasts, and in countries with less strict Parliamentary control than ours the difference between estimates and closed accounts is apt to be very large. With the secrecy now prevailing over the budgets of totalitarian States it seems that even Publicity of Expenditure would hardly be workable.

The Sub-Committee, which had done all the work for the Commission, had spent many months in examining the defence estimates of most of the countries in the world and in cross-examining their Treasury officials. It must have been an interesting experience. I was told, for instance, that contrary to expectation the Russian Budget was carefully kept according to the best Treasury standards and that, to ensure this, the Soviet Government had retained all their old Treasury officials.

Publicity of expenditure would be a very valuable check upon any forms of limitation agreed upon. The curves of expenditure on certain items could be watched and, if they were suspiciously large, questions could

be asked. In season and out of season ever since the disarmament discussions started I had never ceased to urge that some check on expenditure was essential, though there was a great deal of opposition to it in Whitehall and in some rather unexpected quarters.

CHAPTER TEN

A CHANCE OF A SETTLEMENT

The lost opportunity of a settlement. The Hoover plan. The Lausanne Conference. The Conference adjourns. Germany walks out. Sir John Simon.

WHILE the technical Commissions were ploughing the sands of their unprofitable tasks the world was unwittingly moving to the possibility of disarmament settlement. Few at the time realised that the fleeting opportunity had come and had vanished in a few days. Yet I firmly believe that the chance existed; and had a little more determination been exhibited, had one or two of the principal figures concerned reached the heights of statesmanship, the whole of the world's subsequent history might have been different.

The possibility was created by Mr. Stimson, the American Secretary of State. His name had been included in the United States delegation and his profound uneasiness about the Manchurian situation as well as his desire to help forward the Disarmament Conference inspired him to take a trip to Geneva. He saw M. Tardieu, the French Prime Minister, on his way through Paris and arrived at Geneva on April 16th. The significance of the visit was not lost upon other Governments and he was followed by M. Tardieu and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald on April 21st. Sir John Simon and Lord Londonderry, Secretary of State for Air, were already at Geneva and Lord Hailsham, Secretary of State for War, came for a week-end. Signor Grandi was present and Dr. Brüning, the German Chancellor, also arrived. The stage seemed set for a great occasion, since the real plenipotentiaries, who were in a position to come to big

decisions, were all gathered together. The moment was unlikely to recur.

Germany was the main problem and almost every speech made by Herr Nadolny had contained the demand either that other Great Powers should reduce to the level of Germany or that Germany must be permitted to increase to theirs. To this proposition the French and the Little Entente had responded with an enthusiastic "No"; they were not only in direct conflict with Germany over armaments but also with the two Anglo-Saxon Powers over security. They had in fact as little hope of getting Germany to abandon her rearmament claims as of inducing Great Britain and the U.S.A. to commit themselves to a Security Pact. Behind three at least of the protagonists lay the anxiety of forthcoming elections, when any concession at Geneva would be valuable ammunition for their political opponents. M. Tardieu, in the course of the election campaign which he had been conducting, had been more uncompromising than ever. He had repeated once again that France would never agree to further reductions of her own armaments or to an increase in the armaments of any nation. Dr. Brüning, kept in office by the President and at the head of a minority Government, was facing yet another General Election, and he could have little hope of stemming the rising tide of Hitlerism. Mr. Stimson, as Mr. Hoover's representative, had shown himself a "good European" at the London Naval Conference and, in the Manchurian crisis, had gone very far in consultation with the League. Yet, in an election year and belonging to the party which had rejected the Treaty of Versailles and President Wilson's conception of the League, he could offer little more than "consultations," which would be a poor substitute for the Tardieu plan.

He established himself at the Château of Bessinges on the opposite side of the lake to Geneva and from its windows he could see the gaunt Disarmament building, which the City Council had erected. Save possibly for a single visit, it was his nearest contact with the seat of the Conference. But there was a procession of foreign statesmen to the Château to discuss matters with him. On the arrival of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald there were daily conversations there between representatives of some of the Great Powers until May 1st, when they dispersed.

M. Tardieu, who had come primarily to try to prevent the General Commission passing their resolution about qualitative disarmament before they had discussed his plan, took part in the debate on April 22nd and immediately left Geneva to resume his election campaign. Signor Grandi departed for Rome the same day. M. Tardieu was no doubt genuinely anxious about the elections and, when specially urged by Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Stimson to return to Geneva for important consultations, he replied on April 28th that an attack of laryngitis prevented him. Without questioning the genuineness of his malady, one can at least observe that it happened at a very convenient moment. In view of his previous commitments, there was no doubt that his presence at such conversations and the inevitable pressure that would be applied to him to compromise with the Germans would have been extremely embarrassing. The whole Press of the Right and the important interests represented by the *Comité des Forges* would immediately have been in full cry and any chance of rallying the votes of the Right in the elections might have disappeared. The reason for Signor Grandi's ostentatious departure was more obscure. It certainly was from no

desire to avoid meeting Dr. Brüning, for Italy was in complete sympathy with the German case.

The conversations were accordingly whittled down to three delegations, headed by Mr. MacDonald, Dr. Brüning and Mr. Stimson. The French and Italian delegations were kept informed of what passed from day to day but their attitude was necessarily passive. Many subjects were discussed in addition to disarmament but they were all limited to what was called, in the jargon of the League, an exchange of views. Dr. Brüning once more put the German case with studious moderation. They had for some time been thinking out the ideal form of army and their soldiers had been much influenced by the theories of General von Seeckt, who rejected the idea of an army of masses and preferred the small, long service, highly mechanised, professional army as the spearhead of the attack. Behind this would stand a short service conscript army and a highly-organised industry. The Allies had indeed blundered into giving them, with some modifications, the army that they now desired. Dr. Brüning explained that, in addition to a general scaling down of the big Continental armies, Germany desired an increase in the Reichswehr to 150,000 and a reduction in the period of service from 12 years to 6. She also wished to create a militia army of 50,000 men with 3 months' service. This was of course to produce reserves. She claimed in theory the right to all types of arms that other countries possessed but would be content for the time being with "samples" only. This was the first occasion upon which Germany had formulated her terms in detail. No honest man could deny that they were extremely moderate and they favourably impressed Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Stimson. But this humble interpretation of equality of rights was never

repeated. After M. Tardieu's refusal to come, the two statesmen did little more. They patted Dr. Brüning on the back, they held out hopes of something further happening—and took their leave. There was talk of another meeting in the middle of May but obviously a new French Government was not in a position to enter such critical negotiations within a few days of assuming office, and the impetus died away.

I cannot acquit Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Stimson of serious responsibility for letting the opportunity go, and the latter ought not to have gone back to the United States until the meeting had been held. The material difficulties in connection with the French elections were admittedly great but, at the worst, they were temporary. There was no more important thing in the world than to keep those conversations in being and to resume them actively the moment the individuals were free. Yet during the next two heartbreaking years there never again assembled round a table at Geneva five men with the same plenary powers to speak for their people as were available on April 22nd, 1932.

Just think of what hung in the balance! An agreement between Germany and France might have meant peace in the West for a generation. It would have been part of the general settlement and, if this had occurred, it is unlikely that Signor Mussolini would have forced the issue of Abyssinia. Another momentous result would have been that Dr. Brüning would have returned to his countrymen with the laurels of having got rid of the disarmament clauses of the Peace Treaty. Crowned with these, he would have been certain of remaining in power in Germany for years to come and the Nazi Party and all the subsequent upheavals in Europe might never have occurred. Of all the nations that suffered by this lost

opportunity France has fared the worst and it was the shortsightedness of her representative that did most to bring it about. Dr. Brüning had offered terms that would have seemed impossibly favourable to M. Herriot eight months later. But they were not repeated, for Germany always raised her bid and the French were always too late. Each time they scorned terms that they would have jumped at a few months later. This suicidal method of bargaining began with the rejection of a Reichswehr of 150,000 men and "sample" armaments and ended, after several stages, on March 16th, 1935, with a denunciation of the disarmament clauses of the Peace Treaty by the Führer and a German army of 550,000 men.

Professor Arnold Toynbee in his Survey of International Affairs 1932 adds this note to the text (p. 132) describing the conversations at Bessinges.

"After MacDonald had returned to London at the beginning of May, he told a reporter that in his opinion the 'acid test' of the proceedings at Geneva would be 'whether the London Naval Treaty, which had been signed by three Powers, can be made a general treaty.'" In the complete detachment of the British Prime Minister from the real import of the conversations, which these remarks disclose, and the departure of Mr. Stimson for the United States in the middle of perhaps the most fateful negotiations since the Armistice may be found the explanation of the failure to secure the return of M. Tardieu. The success of the Conference and much else besides hung upon it. I can hardly believe that the diplomatic resources of these two statesmen were insufficient to secure M. Tardieu's presence. Yet the alternative, that they did not realise the immense importance of driving through the negotiations there and then, is even less inviting. If it were sought to saddle

M. Tardieu with the blame he would no doubt have his defence. He would say that he had presented his plan and had done his best. He came of a generation which had good cause to hate and distrust the German. His policy was simply one of holding them to the Treaty while they were weak, of keeping France strong and seeking allies and security where they might be found. Yet history, I am confident, will record that here was a unique opportunity of a settlement, of which the chief actors conspicuously failed to take advantage.

The victory of the Left at the French elections brought a Herriot-Daladier combination into power which genuinely desired a settlement with the Germans. It was the irony of fate that, within a month, Dr. Brüning had been replaced by Herr von Papen and his Cabinet of Junkers. The misfortune that a Left Government in Germany had always to face a Right Government in France and vice-versa had been the tragedy of nearly all the post-war relations between the two countries. M. Tardieu disappeared finally from the international scene though for some time he still played a rôle in internal politics. Friend and disciple of M. Clemenceau, he had been brought up in that stern school. He served France well according to the beliefs of the French Right wing and of the Poincaré tradition. But the Laval-Tardieu combination was disastrous for the continuance of a democratic régime in Germany, for disarmament, and ultimately for the security of France and the peace of the world.

The lack of any guidance from the reports of the technical Commissions caused the general Commission to adjourn again in order to see if something could not be done in private conversations between some of the Great Powers. They were in any case condemned to

futility by the absence of Germany, who was not invited. The Lausanne Conference to deal with reparations met on June 10th under the Presidency of Mr. MacDonald and brought their affairs to a successful conclusion on July 7th, whereby reparations were to all intents and purposes abolished though not without severe struggles with the French, represented by M. Herriot. There had been considerable comings and goings between Lausanne and Geneva and both the Prime Minister and Sir John Simon came to assist with the conversations. At one time also Sir Herbert Samuel took a hand, though it was not quite clear what he was doing at Geneva except presumably that no suitable employment could be found for him at Lausanne. Behind closed doors the French, Americans, Japanese and Italians told us what they really intended without embroidery of any kind. Apart from the Americans, and to some extent the Italians, it became more than ever clear that there was little hope of getting any real reductions. The demands of the Japanese were particularly staggering.

It was always an absolute certainty at Geneva that, whenever the Great Powers consulted together, the Small Powers got restive. There were continual complaints from them about meetings in hotel sitting-rooms and procedure contrary to the spirit of the League. The Small Powers could never understand that a nominal equality of status did not confer equality of responsibility. Whatever subject is under discussion it is the Great Powers that have to bear the brunt and at this Conference it was the Great Powers that would have to do the disarming. Yet the more vociferous representatives of the Small Powers were always nagging at and bullying the Great Powers and telling them to "play the game." This self-righteous attitude did not prevent them from

forming themselves into an Eight Power Group under the presidency of Señor Madariaga with a view to agreeing on a policy. If I said that the smaller Powers in the League were frequently an unmitigated nuisance I should be regarded almost as a blasphemer by a large number of earnest people. They exercise a useful function in keeping the Great Powers up to the mark and reminding them of their responsibilities. They have also sent to the League some outstanding personalities. It is, however, rather irritating at times to be lectured upon the proper course to take by small States who risk nothing at all. I have some sympathy with the complaint of Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini against the constitution of the League that confers equality as between, say, Germany and San Salvador.

As the Conference drew nearer to its inevitable adjournment for the summer holidays, the dramatic production of the Hoover plan came like a breath of fresh air into the jaded Committee rooms. It had distinct elements of novelty and was a coherent whole. We had been shown parts of it in strict confidence some time before.

The President of the United States could hardly have failed to appreciate the opportuneness of launching a disarmament plan, which attracted world-wide interest, while he was in the middle of an election campaign. A great coup at Geneva might turn the scale in the U.S.A. The American delegation certainly pulled every string to ensure that the spotlight of the international Press should be directed upon it.

The basic principle of the plan was that there should roughly be a cut of one-third in present armaments, while preserving the same relativity as then existed. Battleships and submarines should be reduced by one-

third, cruisers and destroyers by one-fourth. All heavy mobile guns, tanks and bombing aeroplanes should be abolished and bombardment from the air and chemical warfare should be prohibited. It was in fact a drastic method of qualitative disarmament, designed to strengthen the power of the defence, combined with a one-third all-round cut. The plan of dealing with effectives, the subject which always excited the greatest passion at Geneva, was so ingenious that even at this length of time since it was produced it will bear repetition. It was worked upon a formula based on population. Armies were considered to have two rôles, the preservation of internal order and defence against aggression. The first, which was clearly irreducible, was called the "police component." The classic case of such a component was the size of the armies permitted to ex-enemy States under the Peace Treaties. The ratio between these and their populations was found to be 2.32 per thousand. This therefore was the proper co-efficient for the home territory. For Colonial Powers a similar co-efficient could be found by the ratio between the existing forces of the eight Colonial Powers and the populations in their colonies. This was found to be 2.64 per thousand. Thus could be calculated the correct "police component" for every State. Any surplus existing above this figure was the "defence" or "fear" component, as Mr. Gibson picturesquely called it, which represented what the country wanted to protect itself from invasion. To this component the President proposed to apply a cut of one-third.

We had received privately from the United States delegation a provisional table containing the strength of the two components worked out for all the important Powers upon the basis of population. The results were

highly significant. Nine of them had large defence components, the French and Italian ones being about 500,000. Great Britain had no defence component at all and our police component was 93,000 below the figure that we were entitled to have on the basis of population. India and the Dominions were in a similar position. It was easy to criticise the scheme on the ground that it was worked out on the basis of population and not of political risk. For instance the risk of Belgium being engaged in hostilities was obviously far greater than that of, say, Uruguay; yet, if their populations were equal, they must both have the same military strength. It was, however, a curious coincidence after my prolonged study of the armies of Europe that, if I had had to place them in an order of merit of excessive strength, it would hardly have differed from that of the Hoover plan, which was based upon pure rule of thumb. If a one-third cut had been applied to their defence components, and those without them like ourselves had been immune from reduction, rough justice would have been done and a considerable reduction of effectives would have been secured. On the naval side it was obvious that the cuts would not be accepted. Our standards were not set by another Power but by our absolute needs for guarding trade routes. We could not afford to reduce, even if the Americans and Japanese did so.

When the plan was expounded in the General Commission, Signor Grandi got up and read paragraph after paragraph of the Presidential message, paused for a moment after each and said, "The Italian delegation accepts this paragraph." It was a dramatic gesture and the speech was cheered to the echo in which, contrary to all rules, the Press and spectators joined. It is one of the advantages of belonging to an autocratic régime that

approval to a policy need only be sought from one man. It was Signor Grandi's last appearance, for he fell from power a few days later. The immediate cause was that it was considered that he had not asserted himself sufficiently at the Lausanne Conference and had allowed himself to be excluded from the inner ring of the private consultations. There is little doubt that a contributory cause was the intrigues of Marshal Balbo, who himself appeared at the Conference shortly after, and an Italian member of the Secretariat. Signor Grandi's departure was much regretted. He had been an excellent member of the Council, a real believer in the League and sincere about disarmament. Like all the Italians at Geneva he had been personally most conciliatory and pleasant to deal with. It may be hoped that some day Fate will bring him back to the Foreign Office.

Sir John Simon was outwardly cordial to the plan but said it would require consideration. M. Paul-Boncour, as a Frenchman, could hardly welcome a scheme for carrying out qualitative and quantitative reductions in their army and fleet, particularly as it committed the deadly sin of not mentioning "security" at all. Herr Nadolny welcomed the plan but said it did not go far enough. M. Litvinoff seemed to descry in it some elements of his own numerous contributions. The Japanese were very reserved. The greater number of the small Powers welcomed it enthusiastically. Indeed, counting heads, it would have secured a majority, but the concurrence of Great Britain and France was lacking. A few days later we circulated alternative proposals which differed seriously from President Hoover's on the naval side, our object being qualitative rather than quantitative reduction. It should be noted that, with the signing of the Lausanne agreement on July 9th, the relations of the

French and British Governments with the United States entered a more delicate phase. President Hoover had come to the rescue with a year's moratorium on Allied debts in the year 1931, who in their turn had extended it to reparations from Germany. Now that the Allied Governments had entirely extinguished the latter at Lausanne, they were obviously hoping that President Hoover would do something about debts. In accordance with the policy of the Balfour Note, we considered debts and reparations to be complementary, a connection which President Hoover steadily refused to admit.

The closing drama of Lausanne was a far cry from "*le Boche paiera*" and reparations of £20,000,000,000 which Lord Cunliffe's Committee had fixed at the Peace Conference as the sum which Germany could pay.

It was unfortunate for M. Herriot, who had always stood for moderation, that he was to be officially responsible for the final liquidation of the Poincaré policy towards Germany. A friend who was present at the last secret meeting told me of the scene when Herriot finally refused to put France's signature to such a document. In a tense silence Mr. Runciman (as he then was) walked over to where M. Herriot was sitting, put his hand on his shoulder and whispered in his ear "Remember you fought with *us* against *them*." This appeal to the war-time brotherhood just turned the scale and, labouring under considerable emotion, M. Herriot responded to the appeal of the British delegation and agreed to sign.

M. Herriot has been a powerful figure in French politics for many years. He has always been a man of the Left. He first came to Geneva in 1924 and took part with Mr. Ramsay MacDonald in the famous debates on the Protocol. I do not think that I ever heard him make a speech there but he was active in counsel and his

influence in negotiations behind the scenes has been great. He is large and of rugged appearance, with a great reputation as a trencherman. He has combined membership of the Chamber with the post of Mayor of Lyons, of which he is the uncrowned king, for a great number of years. He is a scholar and a great lover of Beethoven, whose life he has written. For years he was an advocate of a reconciliation with Germany when it was unpopular in France but afterwards he became the chief architect of the Franco-Soviet Pact.

For this he has, I think, a very serious responsibility, but history will judge whether he was right or wrong.

Like most prominent French politicians he has a particular journalist to whom he expounds his views from time to time, and the accomplished Mme Tabouis is generally supposed to reflect his views. He made a serious miscalculation regarding his influence with the Paris mob which nearly cost him his life. In the riots in the Place de la Concorde on February 6th, 1934, he went from the Chamber of Deputies to try to pacify the crowd, believing that his presence would have a calming effect. Far from this being so, their indignation with politicians was such that they were no respecters of persons and it was only the superhuman exertions of the *Gardes Mobiles* that prevented the mob putting him in the Seine. It was a great shock to him, physically and morally.

At the present moment he has retired to the strategical position of President of the Chamber, from which he is well placed to step into the political arena again and form a government at the psychological moment. French internal politics are a complicated maze to the uninitiated, but I have always considered him to be one of the greatest living Frenchmen. His influence, through

good and ill, has always been exerted on the side of peace and moderation. As a representative of his country Englishmen have instinctively trusted him.

The Conference had now to address itself to the task of temporarily winding up its proceedings, as August was approaching and September would be occupied with the Assembly of the League. It was decided to pass a resolution which would contain a record of what had been achieved and a programme for the future. The duty of drafting it was confided to M. Benes, the indefatigable rapporteur of the Conference, and no man was more skilful in the production of a formula of apparent agreement. The aim of the small Powers was to extract something definite from the Great Powers; the French wanted a reference to security; the Americans to the acceptance of the Hoover plan; the Germans to equality of rights. The struggle behind the scenes was fierce and lasted for days. As nobody got all he wanted, the result may perhaps be deemed fairly satisfactory except in the direction of actual achievement. It was indeed a masterpiece of drafting. All kinds of neat little phrases appeared which would be useful if it were desired to challenge the obvious meaning of certain items. For instance, in the paragraph "The High Contracting Parties shall agree as between themselves that all bombardment from the air shall be abolished, subject to agreement with regard to measures to be adopted for the purpose of rendering effective the observance of this rule," the words beginning "subject to agreement" completely nullified the obligatory character of the paragraph. While the phrase "as between themselves" meant that one could still continue to bomb every one who was not a High Contracting Party, i.e., Moroccans, Pathans, Afridis, Iraqis, and so on. There were others

such as "taking into consideration the special circumstances of each state" and "subject to an effective method being found." I do not mean that these were intentional traps; but they were juridical qualifications intended as a protection until firm agreements had been reached. Incidentally I think the resolution gave a far too rosy picture of what had been accomplished and of what there was any reasonable prospect of doing. As to the future, a certain number of subjects still under discussion were referred to the Bureau to try to deal with, and naval armaments were referred to the Naval Powers for conversations. The Bureau was summoned to meet on September 19th and the General Commission four months later. The force of the criticism that a Commission of 65 States was an unwieldy body was recognised and a trial was now to be given to the method of working by a small Committee.

When the resolution was put to the vote two States (Germany and Soviet Russia) voted against it and eight abstained. Herr Nadolny followed up his vote by the grave announcement that, as there was no reference to equality of rights in the resolution, Germany would be compelled to leave the Conference until it had been conceded.

The discussions from February to the end of July had been extremely disheartening. Beyond some vague talk about qualitative disarmament there was little to show except the Hoover plan, and this was clearly doomed to extinction. The difficulties and the dangers were gradually coming into view. It became more than ever apparent that no State of any size wished to disarm and that, unless the Franco-German problem were solved, there was no prospect of even the smallest agreement.

This seems to be a point at which I should make some attempt to give my impressions of Sir John Simon, of whom I saw a good deal during the Disarmament Conference.

I always found him a baffling study. Upon the plane of intellect and perhaps of scholarship too there can hardly be his equal in public life to-day; a great lawyer, a most accomplished debater, there are few in the House of Commons that care to cross swords with him. His marshalling of the facts, his superb clarity, his devastating sarcasm and humour completely demolish the case of the opposing side. There is something almost inhuman in the suave unruffled efficiency of this great advocate.

It is so easy for his detractors to say that he is a careerist, that he speaks from a brief, that he is nothing but a piece of efficient machinery. I suggest that two events in his life—there may be many others—are quite incompatible with this estimate of his character. Firstly is the fact that he left the Coalition Government at the height of the War on the issue of conscription. However ill-judged it may have been, so unpopular a step could only have been taken at the dictate of his conscience, still under the influence of the stern liberal creed of individual liberty. The more ambitious he was, the more difficult it must have been to take a step so likely to be fatal to his future prospects.

Secondly, he was responsible for the Simon Report on India, which he told me he had written almost entirely himself. It is no reflection on the rest of the Commission to say that it contained no other name at the time of outstanding eminence, and Sir John carried it largely on his own shoulders. The Report itself stands alone as the most masterly presentation of the problem that has been

written; it would have earned fame for the author if it had been his sole achievement.

When he went to the Foreign Office people felt that a man of his calibre must be *capax imperii*, yet strangely enough his tenure of the Foreign Office was certainly not a success.

Personally I consider that in some respects he was unlucky and the strictures unfair. He succeeded to office at an extraordinarily difficult time and he had had no previous experience nor had he specialised in foreign affairs. The Manchurian crisis was in full swing. The storm broke in real earnest just before the Disarmament Conference opened with the fighting at Shanghai, which excited public opinion a great deal more than the rather obscure scuffles between Japanese and Chinese troops along the South Manchurian Railway. He had then been three months in office. Telegrams poured in from different quarters warning him of awful disasters whatever line he took and I think he temporised; and that was fatal. His instincts were sound but it was a grave matter for an inexperienced Foreign Secretary, as the issues of war and peace for this country were in the balance. With uncertainties about the attitude of the United States, without strong support in the Cabinet for a 100 per cent League policy and lacking the truculent self-confidence of a Palmerston or the moral fervour of a Cecil, he failed to give a strong lead. But it is ridiculous to lay all the blame on Great Britain, much more so on the Foreign Secretary.

It was the same with the Disarmament Conference. Though we intervened time after time to save it, our disarmed condition forbade any spectacular gesture. Sir John Simon was certainly not the man to make it.

I believe that he realised early that there was no real hope of success and, as time went on, he was more concerned to ensure that the responsibility of the failure should not fall on this country than to prolong the life of the Conference.

He is the most thorough man I have ever known and spares no pains to master the most complicated details of a subject. His methods of getting exactly what he wants to know from a technical adviser are somewhat intimidating. He does not want any explanations, but paces up and down the room and fires off a series of seemingly innocent questions directed to getting at the heart of the case one has to put. As the icy politeness of the questions intensifies, one begins to have doubts about its soundness and one sympathises with the prisoner at the Old Bailey facing that deadly cross-examiner. Then in a few sentences he exposes the inadequacy of your case and you are warmly, if a thought ironically, thanked for your help. The next day you hear it superbly stated in public, if it is fundamentally sound, buttressed by arguments you never thought of and pressed with such force that its success is never in doubt!

Sir John Simon is a man of moods, but he has his human side. When he could be induced at the end of the day to talk of his experiences at the Bar he was most entertaining. I have heard him recite long passages from Shakespeare in most dramatic fashion. His youthful ambition was to be an actor and he would certainly have been a successful one. He was a fine athlete and is an excellent golfer. He is also addicted to chess and used to play with the Air Force representative who took care to avoid a victory on the chess-board, which might imperil the claims of the Air Force in the Conference!

One wonders why his tenure of the Foreign Office was

less successful than one would have expected when one considers his many qualifications. It may be that temperamentally he was unsuited, and he was, I think, too inclined to follow the old Latin advice "*in medio tutissimus ibis.*" His brilliant gifts may be more suited for the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer which he now holds.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

A SECOND FRENCH PLAN

The Bureau. Mr. Eden. Negotiations for the return of Germany. Hitler in power. The second French plan. The British Delegation.

THE period from the adjournment of the Conference until the end of the year was entirely taken up with negotiations for the return of Germany, discussions in the Bureau on a number of useful, if minor, questions, and the introduction of a second French plan. Political matters were tacitly avoided in the absence of Germany, in spite of the French protest that, as Germany was already disarmed, her presence was not essential.

For the first time the British delegation was to have a permanent working head at Geneva in Mr. Anthony Eden, the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs. It was for him a decision big with fate, since his courage and resource rapidly made him one of the most talked of men in Europe and placed the Foreign Secretaryship within his grasp in less than three years, while still in the thirties. When Sir John Simon, who found the disarmament work at Geneva extremely irksome, asked Mr. Eden to undertake it, nothing could have seemed so wildly improbable as that his young Under-Secretary would so soon be in his place. But a permanent representative was long overdue. Beyond Sir John's visits at times of crisis we had had as temporary chief delegates Mr. J. H. Thomas, Lord Londonderry, Lord Stanhope, Lord Stanley, and Sir Philip Sassoon, the last three being Under-Secretaries of the Service Departments. It could not be pretended either that they had any detailed knowledge of the subject outside their own departments or

that they were in a position to make decisions upon any questions of policy. They were in fact, through no fault of their own, merely caretakers. Lord Stanhope had come out for the discussions in the Land Commission and his political skill combined with his practical experience as an ex-regular officer made him an admirable representative.

Nothing decisive could be done until Germany returned, and negotiations were soon begun for that purpose. The opening was none too auspicious, consisting of a long-range bombardment on the wireless between General von Sleicher, who had become Minister of Defence in the von Papen Cabinet, and French Ministers; it ended in an exchange of not very helpful notes on the subject of the increased armaments that Germany desired. One of the points which rankled very much in French minds was the German pose that they had faithfully carried out the provisions of the disarmament clauses of the Peace Treaty. Nothing was farther from the truth. The French had prepared a formidable secret dossier of their breaches of the Treaty, which they were always threatening to produce at a suitable moment. I was in possession of our own, which was not less an indictment of German good faith, backed up by unimpeachable evidence; but after all the past was past and we saw no particular point in raking it up. The dossier covered a good deal of ground. There were the secret short-service enlistments in the Reichswehr and an enormous and illegal proportion of N.C.O.'s, of whom there were something like one for every two private soldiers. There was a secret General Staff, forbidden by the Treaty, a very large number of militarised police living in barracks and carrying out military training, air pilots being trained in Russia, secret arming with forbidden weapons and a secret air force. There was also a very complete

scheme of industrial mobilisation. The associations of ex-Service men, like the Stahlhelm, were giving military training and consisted of perhaps two million men. This by no means exhausts the catalogue. The Germans in fact were repeating their success in Treaty evasion which they had practised in the time of Napoleon.

Yet one wondered to what extent other high-spirited nations in similar circumstances would have refrained from doing their utmost to circumvent a Treaty which had been forced upon them at the point of the bayonet. So long as there was any chance of getting an agreement I used what influence I possessed against bringing up the so-called "secret" dossier. In fact it never was made public, though its contents were tolerably well known in political circles in Paris.

After a good deal of skirmishing, the publication of the new French plan, which was more favourable to German views, and Sir John Simon's fresh statement of the policy of our Government on November 18th, brought Baron von Neurath, the German Foreign Secretary, to Geneva to discuss the return of his Delegation. Our new statement was important and contained the germs of a fair settlement. The Disarmament Convention was to supersede the military clauses of the Peace Treaties and qualitative equality was to be conceded. The failure to grant this was the reason for Germany leaving the Conference. So another five or six months had been wasted in giving in December what was refused in July. In the meantime von Papen had been replaced as Prime Minister by General von Sleicher, and Baron von Neurath was not armed with instructions until December 5th. Mr. MacDonald, Sir John Simon and M. Herriot had also come to Geneva. The discussions were prolonged by an ill-advised, if well-intentioned, attempt

on the part of Mr. Norman Davis, the chief delegate of the United States, to secure an interim Convention to last three years, which would contain all the matter upon which the Conference was already agreed. This proposal delighted the French because it shelved equality of status and proportionately exasperated the Germans. It was finally dropped and agreement was reached on a formula which M. Herriot had taken the precaution of getting the French Cabinet to approve. It was for them a critical decision. It was "the grant to Germany, and to the other Powers disarmed by Treaty, of equality of rights in a system which would provide security for all nations." The agreement became known as the Five-Power Declaration of December 11th, 1932. It was somewhat equivocal, as equality of rights was made to depend upon a state of security which was difficult to define. If the French put their demands high enough, Germany might never gain their equality of rights at all.

As the statesmen emerged from Sir John Simon's sitting-room in the Hotel Beau Rivage after discussions lasting five days, the Prime Minister said to me, with pardonable pride, "We have done a great work." I replied, "It is not an end but a beginning." It is so often that the politician thinks that the finding of a formula is the end of the chapter. I had a vision before me of long and bitter struggles over effectives, material, etc.—indeed all the old controversies again, with the French fighting a rear-guard action all the way.

The last six months had been just as barren as the first. Some small advance had been made in the direction of supervision but on the major issues of disarmament nothing whatever had been done, while the Hoover plan had been slaughtered in the Effectives Committee, largely by the opposition of the French and the Little

Entente. But Germany had been brought back to the Conference and so all was not yet lost.

I have mentioned the second French plan. It was introduced at a meeting of the Bureau on November 14th by M. Massigli. It was again presented to the General Commission when it met in January by M. Paul-Boncour in a speech of over an hour and a half, the length of which did not noticeably increase our knowledge of the plan. The consent of the French General Staff had only been obtained with great difficulty by M. Herriot and M. Paul-Boncour, who were really anxious to obtain a settlement with the Germans. It had taken account of the objections that had been made to the Tardieu plan, and though it was a complete statement of the French thesis it was tempered by a genuine desire to compromise. Had it been produced in 1929 or 1930 the Disarmament Conference might have been a different story. It was the nemesis of nearly all proposals that they were too late. I give the plan in some detail as it was the last of the great "security" plans and is bound to form the basis at some future time of any new proposals that may be made.

M. Paul-Boncour graphically illustrated the security side by dividing the States of the world into three concentric circles. The outer one was intended primarily for non-League States and included all those who had signed the Kellogg Pact for the renunciation of war. The defect of this Pact had been that it lacked any machinery for settling disputes. The outer circle was to correct that omission and establish an obligation firstly to "consult" together if the Pact was broken, secondly to break off financial and economic relations with the aggressor and thirdly not to recognise any *de facto* situation brought about by the breach of an international undertaking. This latter had been copied from League

action taken at the time of the Manchurian dispute. The next or inner circle was to embrace all members of the League who would undertake to "co-operate loyally and effectively in applying Article 16 of the Covenant." These two circles were a very clever device for they killed two birds with one stone. Firstly they were designed to extract from America an obligation to "consult" which would of itself remove the bugbear we had about Article 16, namely the fear of getting at loggerheads with America over the enforcement of sanctions. Secondly if America agreed to this, the difficulty disappeared and there would be no logical objection to our accepting a more precise obligation under Article 16—unless we could think of a new one! The third or innermost circle affected the Continent only and was to be a Mutual Assistance Pact with automatic military sanctions against the aggressor on the lines of the Protocol. All hope had now been abandoned of our accepting such an obligation.

It could not be denied that the whole was a clever piece of work which took full account of the susceptibilities of America and ourselves, and there was some hope of getting us to accept it. On the military side the proposals applied to the innermost circle, that is continental Europe only, and the French were at last prepared to make a real effort towards some equality of status with Germany. All armies were to be on a short-service basis with limited numbers and the period of service would be standardised. Long-service effectives (e.g., N.C.O.'s and specialists) would be in proportion to the effectives. All heavy material for these armies would be prohibited. Each State, however, would also maintain a contingent of long-service troops armed with heavy material, which should be at all times at the disposal of

the Council of the League. The surplus heavy material, after the League contingents had been equipped, was to be stored within the frontiers of the State that owned it but would be under the control of an international commission. Any State which was the victim of an aggression would have access to this material. Colonial and naval forces would not be affected by the scheme, though navies and air forces, like armies, would have to contribute their quota to the International Force. All bombing from the air and bombing aircraft were to be abolished and civil aviation was to be internationalised. An international bombing air force was to be formed.

The plan was well received by many European States and no one could deny the effort that had been made towards meeting criticism. The Germans recognised the concession as to equality of status but soon discovered that a short-service army meant the disappearance of the Reichswehr, to which they had become much attached. Moreover the equality which the French agreed to give them in home-service troops became less attractive when they discovered that the large French colonial army of 250,000 effectives was to remain untouched. The decision to stock the heavy material in each country under international supervision came in for general sarcastic criticism. Delegates asked how much of it would actually reach the victim of an aggression, unless it were the country in which it was interned. Why not destroy it? I had been away from Geneva for a few days and, on my return, found the Conference buzzing with the idea that it should be interned in the Azores or some similar island under the protection of the British fleet, which would only permit its transfer to a *bona fide* victim of an aggression. My opinion of the feasibility of the plan was canvassed both by our own and other

delegations. I said that I believed that the cost of caring for our own modest reserve material was about £1,000,000 per annum and it could hardly cost less than fifty times that amount for Europe, apart from the initial cost of carriage and building magazines for storage. I did not see how it could reach the threatened State in time or possibly at all and I wondered whether the British Government would accept the responsibility of escorting it or the risk of a *casus belli*, if it were attacked on the high seas. The Germans would have been at the greatest disadvantage, as officially at least they had no heavy material to intern.

The political part of the plan had a more stormy passage, although it had the blessing of some small States. The most prominent opponent of it was Italy, whose delegate said that it was quite impossible for her to join the innermost circle of continental Europe if Great Britain stood aloof. Belgium and Holland expressed the same feelings. The United States sat on the fence and declined to commit themselves to the outer circle for the time being. One could quite understand their difficulty in view of the traditional horror of European entanglements that existed in the minds of the American electorate. There was a great deal of criticism of one kind and another and it soon became clear that the whole security plan would never find acceptance. M. Paul-Boncour did not attempt to conceal his disappointment and made a desperate effort to preserve the guarantee pact or innermost circle from destruction, by getting it referred to the Political Commission. This was the General Commission under another name, which had only once met formally since the Conference had started. No previous plan, however, had survived this method of handling, as it was generally regarded as a polite means

of destroying an unpopular proposal. The debate was chiefly memorable for the appearance of two new French Ministers at the General Commission, M. Daladier, Minister for War, and M. Pierre Cot, Minister for the Air, who made speeches that produced a deep impression. They were a new type of French politician: they were young, had fought in the war and were far removed from the old Poincaré school. They were intensely in earnest and desired a settlement with Germany and real disarmament. M. Daladier was perhaps the bigger man of the two; indeed, for my part, he seemed to me to be one of the most considerable statesmen that France had ever sent to Geneva, in spite of the illustrious names that preceded him. He received a grave check to his political career when he was Prime Minister, on February 6th, 1934, the night of the fatal riots in the Place de la Concorde. But he came back to office later and the French General Staff believe in him. Pierre Cot is of a different type, more emotional, a better speaker and more to the Left in politics. He too should go far. He made a most eloquent appeal to Germany for co-operation and offered her equality in short-service armies. This was an immense concession from the French. How much might have been saved in the future if these two young men and Mr. Eden, all of the war generation, had been left to work out a settlement with Germany before it was too late.

Shortly before the end of 1932 the League had to select a new Secretary General to replace Sir Eric Drummond, whose resignation had become effective on October 17th. I have endeavoured on page 44 to give some estimate of his services to the League. When it was known that he was going to resign, a good deal of lobbying took place concerning the appointment of his successor. M. Benes,

I need hardly say, was pushed well to the fore by his friends as a candidate but, for the same reasons as prevented him from being President of the Disarmament Conference, he was not likely to be generally acceptable. Mr. Balfour had promised the French many years before to support a Frenchman when the vacancy occurred, and, after some strenuous wire-pulling and intrigue, it gradually became clear that M. Joseph Avenol, Deputy Secretary General since 1923, was the most likely candidate. He was subsequently elected. M. Avenol had had much experience of the League and had been on many missions on its behalf all over the world. He had been brought up in the French Treasury and was an excellent civil servant with a considerable knowledge of finance and organisation, which Sir Eric Drummond lacked. He had, however, far less political experience and less influence at Geneva. But he is as honest as the day and his fellow countrymen accuse him of being pro-English, which is a good testimony to his impartiality. It is indeed of decisive importance in a Secretary General. M. Avenol has done extremely well on falling revenues and a diminishing League prestige. He is cautious and reserved, the ideal civil servant, and is held in high regard by members of the Secretariat. One will look in vain for "fireworks" from M. Avenol but one may be sure that the League is in safe hands.

Sterner events now were taking place outside the Conference. Field-Marshal von Hindenburg, the aged President of the German Reich, had been able, by his own prestige and by severely straining the Constitution, to keep the Nazis out of office ever since the middle of 1930. After the fall of Brüning came the short Cabinets of von Papen and General von Sleicher. The latter had long been a subtle wire-puller and politician behind the scenes.

It was expected, when at last he came out into the open, that he would be more than a match for Hitler. But the astute political soldier made surprising mistakes. He became friendly with the Socialists and this turned the Nationalists against him. About the same time von Papen had a meeting with Hitler in a house in Cologne and made a bargain whereby he should serve in Hitler's Cabinet as vice-Chancellor, fully expecting that he would be able to twist the Nazis, who were novices in the art of government, round his fingers. He was soon to be undeceived. By his betrayal of von Sleicher, however, he practically forced the President to allow Hitler to form a Government, with reservations on the President's part that Baron von Neurath must remain at the Foreign Office and a soldier must be War Minister. Thus General von Sleicher fell, after having been head of the Government a mere two months. He was naturally unsympathetic to the new régime and could never resist intrigue and having "irons in the fire." In the course of the "purge" of June 30th, 1933, his enemies used certain correspondence he had had with friends in Paris and a record of an interview with the French Ambassador in Berlin to launch against him an accusation of treason. He and his wife were murdered on that day by S.S. men and his friend General von Bredow was also executed. No German soldier believed them guilty of anything more than indiscretion and it was long before the Army forgave these crimes. The treacherous von Papen escaped with his life, though his secretary was arrested and shot, and was content to spin fresh webs of political intrigue in the service of his master as Ambassador in Vienna.

Herr Hitler became Chancellor on January 30th, 1933. A few days later I entered the General Commission and sat down, when a soldier from the German delegation,

who were always next to us, came over and told me that my friend and colleague, General von Blomberg, had been summoned to Berlin to be Minister of War. He had apparently caught the eye of the President when he was commanding the 1st Division at Koenigsberg in East Prussia. He first came to Geneva as military representative of Germany in 1931 and since that time we have been on most friendly terms. He could hardly be blamed for not being very interested in disarmament questions except as they affected his country. He was much happier, I am sure, commanding his division, for he is a true soldier and his heart is in his work. He has little interest in politics, though in the very responsible position of Minister of Defence and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, he could not avoid them entirely. I found him a loyal and straightforward colleague and his word was always his bond. Whatever the future may bring, I am convinced that his influence was exerted on the side of peace, though he believed in being strong and was building up a large and extremely efficient army. I sometimes wondered whether he, General Réquin, the distinguished French general, and myself could not have reached an armaments agreement between France and Germany if we had been given a free hand.

Politically of course the coming of Hitlerism had a profound effect upon the future of the Conference. The exuberance of his supporters, the raucous threats bawled into the ether, the armed Brownshirts, the persecution of the Jews, the hunting out of Communists and Socialists, all combined to make the French and others draw back, though the full effect was not perhaps felt at first.

The first six months of the Conference had seen the principle of qualitative disarmament accepted and the

withdrawal of Germany. The next six months saw the return of Germany, the failure of the Hoover and the French plans, and the profound change in atmosphere due to the arrival of Herr Hitler in power. However disastrous this may have been for the future peace of the world, other Powers and, above all, the French have only themselves to blame for bringing it about. Our sins were less, for they were sins not of commission but of omission. We ought to have brought more pressure to bear upon the French and to have struggled harder to keep moderate Governments alive in Germany. With the end of the French plan, there was really nothing left: even an optimist like Mr. Henderson realised that the end was in sight. There was one possibility and we in the British Delegation decided to prepare a complete Convention with the figures filled in. How it was done and how it fared I will tell in the next chapter.

The British delegation was a good team, particularly after the coming of Mr. Eden. There was plenty of very hard work, for we had to take the lead in every discussion, and it was not a large delegation. In room sixty and sixty-one of the hotel, which were the offices of the delegation, the lady typists and secretaries were often seriously overworked, but they never faltered. When Sir John or the Prime Minister had to make an important speech, 300 copies had to be "roneo'd" beforehand to give to the Press. It was frequently recast completely about midnight, which meant that the typists were slaving away on very inadequate machines until three o'clock in the morning. It was curious to note the different methods of Ministers in the preparation of their speeches. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald certainly gave himself very little time and did not ask for any assistance either as to method or substance. So far as I could see his speech

introducing the Draft Convention was made from a few rough notes. Sir John Simon for all his experience, his gifts of oratory and power of *ex tempore* speaking, was just the opposite. He took infinite pains; draft after draft was prepared and advisers were constantly being called in for consultation. The whole delegation was kept on tenterhooks and Sir John was obviously feeling like a batsman shortly before he goes in to bat in an important match or like a great actor on a first night.

The hardest-worked man of all was Mr. Alexander Cadogan of the Foreign Office, who had his finger on everything and had an unerring sense of the right course to take. Some of the issues became extremely grave, both on disarmament and over Manchuria, but he was always adequate and the Ministers leaned heavily upon him for advice.

The pressure of work had its compensations. Some of us used to make frequent excursions at week-ends in which Mr. Eden and his devoted secretary, Robin Hankey, usually joined. We used to dine together too in restaurants in the evening. The talks we had among men in very different walks of life, Services, politics, diplomacy, finance and the law, were a great education for me and I have always looked back to that time of association with those good friends with the keenest pleasure.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE BRITISH EFFORT

We try to save the Conference. The British Draft Convention. The Four-Power Pact and Mussolini. The crisis of the Conference. Nazi excesses. German withdrawal.

THE Conference had now reached a critical stage. The task of driving it along on practical lines belonged to Mr. Henderson or, failing him, some great man in the Conference itself. Lord Cecil might have done it or even General Smuts, if he had been President, but it was beyond Mr. Henderson's powers. Handicapped by ill-health, he lacked the force and the subtlety. From the officers of the Conference, M. Benes, the Rapporteur, and M. Politis, the Vice-President, he seemed to get little or no help, though they were masters of League procedure and excelled in negotiation. For some reason Mr. Henderson seemed to stand completely alone, after Sir Eric's departure, except for the faithful M. Aghnides, the head of the Disarmament section. M. Avenol did his best but it was all new to him. It is possible that no one could have pulled things together and that events were merely pursuing their predestined course. However that may be, we were by February reduced to the desultory work of some interminable committees and failure stared us in the face. In these depressing circumstances the British delegation made the last effort. Our task at Geneva was to prepare a complete Convention *with the figures filled in.* The Conference had had a surfeit of plans, but they had never seen a complete Convention. I do not think that any other delegation could have commanded sufficient authority to do it. We had a good deal of material of one kind and another

and some of the less contentious questions had already been put into shape as draft articles. But there remained a large area about which there was no sign of agreement.

It fell to me to draft the military clauses, which were the most contentious, and to help in certain other parts of the Convention. So far as the effectives were concerned, I was able to use some agreed conclusions of the Effectives Committee, which had been sitting intermittently for months. I incorporated *en bloc* the French plan for short-service armies in Continental Europe. This pleased them and helped to win their approval. Other articles provided for calculating the amount of military training done by such bodies as the Fascist Militia, the German military associations and their militarised police. These questions had always been extremely troublesome. The essence of the Draft would naturally be the allotment of figures and this was a highly delicate matter. I was for the moment in the position of a super-dictator! The problem was almost entirely one of reconciling French and German claims. I had reason to believe that the French were prepared to accept equality of forces at home with Germany. It was a nice calculation, therefore, to try to arrive at a number which would not give the impression that Germany was given a big increase and at the same time satisfy the French that they were not being asked to make impossible sacrifices. After much consideration I came to the conclusion that 200,000 would be a fair compromise, with a period of service of eight months. This would put all continental armies on a militia basis and thus render aggression difficult. Although the French would have suffered a large reduction in their Home Forces, they would still have 200,000 for their Colonial Forces, to which a reduction of only 50,000 was applied. The figure of 200,000 was thus the basic figure.

I allotted that to Poland and to Italy, and to the U.S.S.R. I gave 500,000. This latter seemed large but it meant a reduction of 250,000. It was not very popular and my French colleague said to me, "*Ça me choque un peu.*" Yet if one had to fix the land armaments of the world one had to be fair and not allow oneself to be influenced by political creeds. I fixed the remaining armies in relation to the basic figure and in most cases I was able to propose reductions.

The only figures actually incorporated in our draft were those of continental Europe, but a note was added that this was for illustration only and they would all have to go in. Time pressed and it was the continental figures that really mattered.

The day after the Convention was published I almost meditated going on leave as I expected that they would all be seeking my blood. Yet the figures were in fact very well received. Several of the delegates came to see me and asked for increases of their own but there was almost an entire absence of general criticism. Herr Dollfuss attacked Mr. Eden in private on the subject of the figures allotted to Austria. Mr. Eden told him to go and see me but warned him that I was "a very hard man and unlikely to alter my views." I would not agree to increases, as I knew that once one brick was loosened the whole structure would fall like a pack of cards.

One curious incident arose when the table of effectives was discussed in the General Commission. When my assistant, Major Sir Brian Robertson, to whose powerful help I bear grateful testimony, and I were working out the figures for Continental Europe, we completely forgot to include Turkey. This omission was deeply upsetting to the Turkish delegate, who protested most strongly in the General Commission that Turkey was a European

Power. It was a question of *amour propre.* He had, however, noticed, he said, that we had allotted no figures for ourselves and he slyly remarked, "*Peut-être il y a un parallelisme entre le Bosphore et la Manche.*" The result of the lapse went even further and there were diplomatic protests to our Ambassador in Angora and by the Turkish Ambassador in London. They were gravely assured that no slight upon Turkey was intended and reasons were given for the omission that I had never even thought of. I told the Turkish delegate afterwards that he might consider himself fortunate that the Turkish figures had been left out, as he would not be at all pleased if he saw the figures that I had in mind for them!

So far as material was concerned, the limit for mobile guns was fixed at 105 millimetres or 4.2-inches. Existing guns up to 6-inch might be retained but all replacements must be within a 4.2-inch limit. This avoided any German rearmament and gave them theoretical but not actual equality of status, a principle with which they had professed to be content. Tanks were limited to 16 tons but a note was added that the question of the light tank must be further considered. Later, on receiving Cabinet authority to agree to numerical limitation of tanks, we presented an amendment to that effect, though the figures for each country were not stated. Here also Germany got equality of treatment.

The naval clauses were intended to include France and Italy in the Treaty of London and generally to maintain an equilibrium in naval armaments until 1935, when it was proposed that a new Naval Conference should meet. They were admirably drafted and were not seriously controversial.

The air clauses were less fortunate. The main object

of criticism was that, though air bombing was prohibited, an exception was made in the case of bombing "for police purposes in outlying regions." However convenient the retention of "police" bombing might be, it was difficult to defend as a principle and eventually Mr. Eden was authorised by the Cabinet to say that we would not insist upon this clause, if it were the only obstacle to agreement. It was in any case unsatisfactory because no one knew what "outlying regions" were. I always wondered how the exact mind of Sir John Simon could have tolerated so slipshod a phrase. We were also severely criticised for not proposing the internationalisation of civil aviation. Aeroplanes, except troop carriers, were to be limited to a weight of 3 tons and the numbers allowed to each country were stated in a table. All the Great Powers were to have 500, except Germany, who was to have none at all. Thus the whole principle of equality of status was violated. It was quite indefensible, as we had conceded it for land armaments, and the draft should have been better co-ordinated. It roused great indignation among the Germans.

Part I. of the Convention dealt with security and was based on the Pact of Paris and not on the Covenant. There was a good deal to be said for this, as there were important Powers outside the League. It provided for consultation in the event of alleged aggression and was as much as we thought the Americans would stand. It was proposed that regional agreements might be made for such States as desired to do so. This was to give the opportunity for the French and their friends to try to induce other countries to join in guarantee pacts. These security proposals came in for a great deal of criticism owing to their inadequacy and they certainly were somewhat mild. They were completely re-drafted later on.

The other chapters dealt with chemical warfare, a Permanent Disarmament Commission, and other essential provisions.

Mr. Eden took it home for review by the Cabinet and the Departments interested but there were no serious alterations and on March 9th the Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, and Sir John Simon came to Geneva, breaking their journey in Paris to hold discussions with the French Ministers. The European situation was becoming more critical as Herr Hitler had just started enrolling his Brownshirts as auxiliary police, which had caused anxiety. The French proposed that the matter should be brought before the Council of the League.

On the arrival of the two British Ministers, they proceeded to take soundings among other delegations without revealing the existence of the draft, for the Cabinet at home were by no means sanguine about it and even expected that it might do us a lot of harm. But Mr. Eden and others of us in our delegation took an exactly opposite view, which we did our best to put before them. The French had been given a certain amount of information about the draft and M. Paul-Boncour, on the eve of its production, spoke bitterly of our plan. Their peculiar anxiety was about their heavy material, of which they had large quantities. Personally I thought my own proposal for the early destruction of all material above the specified limit was too drastic, but there was no satisfactory alternative for ensuring its safe custody. The French might well argue that it ought to be kept in being until it was seen how Germany complied with the Convention. I entirely agreed but could find no solution. I hoped, however, that some practical modification would be arranged in the course of the discussions.

It was obvious that the French would not accept it as it stood.

On the evening before the Convention was launched I spent from 10 p.m. till 1 a.m. with Mr. Eden and Mr. Cadogan in discussion with the Prime Minister and Sir John Simon. They had come to the conclusion that the Convention must be launched but, even when we broke up, the Prime Minister had not been convinced as to whether to put in the figures or leave them out. We spent three hours pressing most strongly that they should be put in, as we considered them the essence of the whole Convention. The next morning the Prime Minister, having slept upon it, decided to take the plunge. In the afternoon he introduced the Draft Convention in a speech to the General Commission. It was a frank and helpful contribution but one could see, even then, the tendency towards repetition and incoherence which was so painfully apparent in his speeches later on. At one moment I saw him reel backwards and start exhorting the audience to "be men, not mannequins," becoming completely irrelevant. He said afterwards that, for a half-minute, he had completely lost consciousness and did not know what he was saying. He was a very tired man and realised that he had lost his grip of big audiences, though round the table he remained a skilful negotiator and a very live personality. Until his vitality was sapped by the intolerable strain of years of overwork he was a forceful character with ability of a high order. The Foreign Office had the greatest respect for his diplomatic skill when he was its head in 1924: he undoubtedly had a natural gift for foreign affairs. He was also a great success at international conferences, where his great intelligence and personal charm, no less than the romance of his political career, were extremely

effective. Till his eyesight began to fail he read his Cabinet papers more than most Ministers and always seemed to me to be one of the best informed at any Ministerial Committees that I attended. When he became Prime Minister in what was a predominantly Conservative Cabinet in 1931, he remained completely master in his own house and Conservative Ministers seemed just as anxious to stand well with him as with their own leader. He was always inclined to be inscrutable and secretive, and his colleagues in the Labour Cabinet seemed to know even less of what was in his mind than did those in the National Government. I sensed dimly the bitter feuds that must have made the last Labour Cabinet an uncomfortable body to be in. He thought that the Conservatives failed to give him enough support in the face of Labour attacks upon him and a sensitive man must have felt acutely the torrents of abuse and misrepresentation to which he was continually subjected by his former colleagues. He was deeply conscious of his responsibilities as Prime Minister and the defence of the Empire was safe in his hands, in spite of some wild speeches when in opposition. He had the satisfaction of seeing the greater number of the causes for which he fought in his earlier days passed into law by his political opponents. History will do justice to this great man, whose memory has temporarily been clouded by bitter political controversy. He had in his time done much for European peace; and the Labour Party owe him an immense debt for his share in its creation and, because, in a difficult period, he had the vision to guide the movement safely into constitutional channels.

The Convention was most favourably and even enthusiastically received. M. Daladier, the French

Prime Minister, gave it a warm welcome, as did Herr Nadolny, Mr. Gibson and the Italian representative, but opinion was reserved as the Convention was only distributed at the end of the introductory speech and discussion was postponed for a few days. The Prime Minister and Sir John Simon departed for Rome the following day in response to an invitation from Signor Mussolini.

A general discussion began on March 24th and lasted for four days. The Italian delegate repeated Signor Grandi's action regarding the Hoover Plan and accepted the British Draft as it stood, but intimated that this was only valid so long as no substantial amendments were made to it. This attitude was extremely helpful. Mr. Norman Davis, who had succeeded Mr. Gibson as head of the United States delegation, also accepted it in principle and reminded his audience that amendments ought to be severely discouraged, if there was to be any hope of getting agreement. The French viewed it with favour on the whole but, though they made no open criticism, they disliked the supervision clauses as well as the security ones, because they rightly thought that they did not go far enough, and they were horrified at the idea of Germany being automatically released from the disarmament clauses of the Treaty of Versailles by accepting the Convention. But there was no escape from this if the "equality of rights" Declaration of December 11th was to hold good, except on the plea that "security," as the French saw it, had not been achieved. The delegates who cared about disarmament realised that amendments would provoke counter-amendments and that in the end the Draft Convention would be destroyed, as other plans had been, not by the sudden death of an adverse vote but by the more lingering agony of "the death of a

thousand cuts." We were determined not to allow it to be sent to Committees and Sir John Simon, in summing up the debate, warned the Conference that amendments would not be welcomed unless they received general support. The presentation of the British Draft Convention was, in my judgment, the psychological moment for saving the Conference. Such a one had presented itself a year before. What we ought to have done was to have banged down the Draft on the table and said "Here is a Convention which we have done our best to make fair to all. It is not perfect and there are still some gaps to be filled in, but it is the best that we are ever likely to get. The world is waiting and political tension is increasing. This is your last chance and you must take it or leave it as it stands. I propose that the Conference should reassemble in ten days' time, to give you an opportunity to consult your Governments, and that we should there and then vote 'Aye' or 'No' whether we accept the British Draft. Any State that destroys the Convention by voting against it will have to shoulder a heavy responsibility."

It would have been a very bold course to take, but it is a deep conviction of mine that it would have succeeded, and, as time brings an added perspective, the more certain am I that I am right. I was in close touch with the general feeling at the time and I am sure that there was very great anxiety about the fate of the Conference and the gathering storms. The immense advance by the French towards the German point of view was a most favourable sign, although it proved to be too late. The gesture would have appealed to the Prime Minister, as he loved to be theatrical and he did not lack courage. The Cabinet, on the other hand, who naturally had no opportunity of gauging the favourable atmosphere at Geneva, which was definitely one of "now or never," would

perhaps have shrunk from the responsibility of such a step. But we should have been sure of American and Italian backing and the French and Germans could hardly have said "No." Possibly the Japanese would have been difficult, but the more earnest small Powers would all have agreed, and a few adverse votes from minor Powers would not have mattered. The chance was lost because it was never realised by those at home what a winner we had in our stable.

Let us now turn aside for a short space to follow the fortunes of the two British Ministers in Rome. Signor Mussolini was obviously flattered by the suggestion of the visit, which was intended by the Prime Minister to smooth the path of the disarmament discussions. But the Duce had many other things to talk about, notably the revision of treaties and the creation of a new Holy Alliance. When the Prime Minister and Sir John Simon arrived at Ostia in a large Italian aeroplane piloted by Marshal Balbo, they were greeted by Signor Mussolini and were almost simultaneously supplied with a carbon copy of a project for a Four-Power Pact. They studied it as best they could in the drive to Rome and between official visits. In the course of the afternoon Sir John Simon politely indicated to Signor Mussolini that there were one or two points upon which amendment was desirable. This was not well received by the Duce. The draft itself consisted of four articles, which embodied the idea that the four Signatory Powers should undertake the leadership in Europe; that there should be a revision of the Peace Treaties; that Germany should be permitted by other Powers to obtain equality of rights, if the Conference broke down; and that there should be some Colonial readjustment. The Duce had taken the greatest pains to impress the British Ministers with the

achievements of Fascism. The Prime Minister was immensely attracted by the order and discipline and was even photographed making a Fascist salute! On their way home they stopped in Paris to explain the proposed Pact to the French Ministers. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald described his experiences in Geneva and Rome to the House of Commons but unfortunately laid the chief emphasis on revision of treaties in reference to the Four-Power Pact, which at once aroused resentment at home and abroad.

In Central Europe the storm of opposition to the Pact was rapidly gathering and it burst with full force upon the head of France. The Little Entente were beside themselves with fury and under the leadership of M. Benes and M. Titulescu proceeded to bully and threaten France with the cancellation of their military alliances unless all reference to the revision of treaties was excised. Poland joined in the chorus and was peculiarly bitter, not so much on account of the matter of the Pact but because she had been treated as a small Power. The upshot of it all was that the Pact was largely emasculated and, though signed in Rome, was never ratified.

It was a great disappointment to Signor Mussolini, who had made an honest attempt, according to his lights, to ease the dangerous political situation. His idea of giving some real concession to Germany and of some territorial revision of the Peace Treaties was sound statesmanship. The bringing of the four Great Powers together would relax the tension between France and Italy and between France and Germany. It might also have exercised a moderating influence with Herr Hitler. The Pact was anathema to the French because they might have found themselves in a minority among the Four and it did to some extent tend to encroach upon League pre-

serves. It is heresy to say so, but I have never been convinced of the virtues of equality of status among great and small at Geneva. It is the Great Powers upon whom the issues of peace and war depend. If they stand together, there will be peace: if they quarrel, no number of small Powers can stop it. It is conceivable that, if the Pact had been worked somewhat on the lines that Signor Mussolini hoped, he would never have embarked upon the Abyssinian adventure at all. I regard it as a calamity that the bluster of the Little Entente, whose attitude at the Disarmament Conference had been conspicuously self-seeking and obstructive, should have been allowed to upset Signor Mussolini's one effort to keep the peace and save the Disarmament Conference. We know from Marshal de Bono's very indiscreet book on Abyssinia that the Duce made up his mind to seize that country during 1933. I believe that the virtual rejection of his Pact was the turning point. His egoism and sensitiveness were factors in the situation and he was not by nature tolerant or peace loving. But he had made a real attempt to work the League, though his obsession about equality of status of the small Powers prejudiced him against it. He had supported every sensible disarmament proposal and was genuinely anxious to secure substantial reductions, not of course for purely unselfish reasons. Henceforward his speeches and his acts were to become increasingly bellicose, while his jeers at the League and the idea of eternal peace were frequent. As often happened in political crises, our relations with France caused us to assume a mediatory position, with our usual air of patronising benevolence to both parties. It was an occasion, had we possessed the vision to see it, when we should have applied all our energies to securing agreement at a time when Nazi Germany was still to some

extent amenable so far as her external policy was concerned, and Italy was friendly.

When the General Commission resumed after four weeks recess, the discussion opened with the first reading of the British Draft. To the chapter on Effectives the German delegation produced a series of amendments, the most important of which was their refusal to give up the Reichswehr, which Herr Nadolny described as the corner-stone of the edifice upon which the new Germany was to be built and the one stable element in a country still in the grip of revolution. He pointed out that the Allies at the Peace Conference had forced a long-service professional army upon Germany, which was a system which they much disliked and completely contrary to all their traditions. By degrees, however, they had got used to it and made it into an efficient organisation. They were now told that the French regarded it as the most dangerous type of army it was possible for any State to have. He found it difficult to reconcile this attitude with that of Mr. Lloyd George in Paris. Herr Nadolny's arguments were, of course, unanswerable. As a matter of fact Marshal Foch had always been in favour of giving the Germans a short-service army, because he believed that a long-service professional one would become an immense reservoir of N.C.O.'s and specialists. It was Mr. Lloyd George, backed by our own General Staff, who insisted on a long-service Reichswehr, because it prevented the accumulation of trained reserves. France had reverted to Marshal Foch's view and had become thoroughly frightened at the possibility of a secretly expanded and mechanised Reichswehr launching a sudden attack upon them while they were mobilising. Although the German arguments were overwhelming, it was perfectly clear

that the French, in view of their obsession, would never sign a Convention which did not abolish the Reichswehr. The only alternative, therefore, was to try to overcome the German resistance, as uniformity in types of armies was essential to any disarmament scheme.

There was no possibility of continuing the discussions unless we could get the question of effectives settled. The usual procedure at Geneva is to ask the rapporteur in such circumstances to conduct private negotiations, and they were entrusted to Mr. Eden as representative of the country that had produced the Draft Convention. For the greater part of a week we were engaged in some most unpleasant discussions with Herr Nadolny who banged the table and said they would never give way. As we stuck to our guns it became apparent to the Germans that we were in deadly earnest and were prepared to break up the Conference on this issue. Finally Herr Nadolny, who appeared to be without instructions of any kind, went off to Berlin to try to get some. I admired Mr. Eden very much during these difficult discussions. Although the rough-and-tumble methods of Herr Nadolny must have been extremely distasteful to him, he never lost his head or his temper. It was entirely due to his personal influence and character that they ended so satisfactorily.

Meanwhile the tide of indignation at Nazi excesses had been steadily growing all over the world and particularly in Great Britain and the United States. Europe, too, was aghast at the persecution of the Jews and social democrats and the orgy of militant nationalism which had taken possession of the country. Rearmament proceeded at a rapid pace in flagrant violation of the Peace Treaty. Storm detachments (S.A.) of the Nazis and Stahlhelm had been converted into Auxiliary

Police. The total strength of these two semi-military bodies must have amounted to 2,500,000. A National Labour Corps had been created and numbered 250,000 men. It was then suspected that they were receiving military training, though actually this was not the case. Under the pretence of air "sport" a secret air force was formed and put into uniform, while it was known that a number of German military aeroplanes existed in Russia, where secret training had been carried on, and orders had been given for further manufacture. Preparations were also in progress for organising industry for the manufacture of war material on a large scale.

It was in this atmosphere that the disarmament discussions had now to proceed and it is to the credit of the Governments chiefly concerned that they were prepared to continue the discussions at all. It should also be remembered that, in spite of the hectic rearmament, Germany was still quite impotent before the armed forces of France and Great Britain. Herr Hitler would be taking a serious risk if he provoked them too far, for the ex-Allies could still coerce Germany. Sir John Simon at the time asked me, à propos of Germany, "If you were God, what would you do?" It was a formidable question and, after some thought, I said "There must come a time when we shall have to act, if they do not change their methods. It may come very soon. To save the peace of the world, I think the correct action would be for the French, British and Belgian armies, after due warning, to reoccupy the Rhine bridgeheads. Germany is incapable of resistance and so long as we hold the Rhine we have a hostage for her good behaviour." My proposal was perhaps too drastic for my questioner and was also of doubtful legality. Its merit was that it would have

ensured a change of régime in Germany and it would have been accomplished without fighting. The Nazis could never have survived the *onus* of being responsible for the return of the Allied occupation. No one knew what the future would be and, if we waited a year, we could not take such action to enforce the Treaty without a war.

On May 11th Lord Hailsham, Secretary of State for War, warned Germany in a speech in the House of Lords that, if there were a breakdown of the Conference due to German withdrawal, she would remain bound by the Treaty of Versailles and that we should prevent her from rearming by force, if necessary. The next day M. Paul-Boncour, the French Foreign Minister, issued a statement on similar lines. On May 13th Herr von Papen made a provocative speech eulogising war and urging German mothers to bear children so that they might die fighting for their country. On May 16th President Roosevelt issued a message earnestly commending the British Draft Convention and hoping for its speedy acceptance, while warning Germany that America would never countenance rearmament and would hold her responsible for a breakdown. It had been known that Herr Hitler was going to deliver a speech on May 17th and the General Commission had adjourned for that purpose. President Roosevelt's message was extremely helpful and no doubt, with other events, had considerable influence upon the Führer and induced moderation.

The German Chancellor's speech considerably eased the tension, as its tone was conciliatory. He stated once more the German position regarding disarmament and renewed his demand for equality of rights, but was prepared for a transitional period while the other Powers disarmed. He professed his great desire for peace and

said he had no intention of using force in support of German claims. He also expressed his readiness to withdraw the German amendments.

The General Commission met with a feeling of greater optimism, which was increased by a speech of Mr. Norman Davis, in which he outlined the American attitude towards security. After giving his full support to the British Draft, he said in very carefully chosen words, "We are willing to consult with other States in case of a threat to peace, with a view to averting a conflict. Further than that, in the event that the States, in conference, determine that a State has been guilty of a breach of the peace and take measures against the violator, then, if we concur in that judgment, we will refrain from any action tending to defeat such collective effort, which these States may thus make to restore peace." These were momentous words and were the clearest intimation that the United States had yet given of their intention to co-operate actively with the League against an aggressor. They were remembered during the Abyssinian War when the Government of the United States lacked the necessary legal authority to join in oil sanctions. It was another instance of the helplessness of United States diplomacy in the face of a Congress determined on isolation.

The security chapters were re-drafted in accordance with the declaration, while M. Politis performed prodigies of ingenuity in drafting a Continental Pact, the innermost circle of security, which would be annexed to the Convention. It was during these discussions that I noticed the very cordial manner in which M. Paul-Boncour received the Soviet proposals for the definition of the aggressor. M. Herriot had already been to Russia and had been made an honorary Colonel in the Red

Army. He returned completely converted to the desirability of reviving the alliance in view of the threatening situation in Germany. I could not help feeling that the foundations of the entente had already been laid.

The rest of the first reading was then hurried through in order to enable the delegates to attend the World Economic Conference, which was to meet in London on June 10th. Several questions about which there was acute controversy had not been seriously discussed. It was agreed that the Bureau should be responsible for preparing the draft for a second reading and that Mr. Henderson should be in charge of the negotiations for this purpose.

On June 8th there was a meeting in Paris between M. Daladier, the French Prime Minister, Lord Londonderry, Mr. Eden and Mr. Norman Davis. M. Daladier informed them of the difficulties that the French would have about destroying their heavy material, with which we fully sympathised, and raised for the first time the question of a trial period in the Convention, during which the Reichswehr would be transformed to short service and experience would be gained of the efficacy of supervision and of German good faith. There would be no corresponding obligation on the part of the other Powers to make any reductions during this period.

Mr. Henderson proceeded to London with a long list of major questions, which he thought would be capable of settlement, but he met with acute disappointment. Nobody at the Economic Conference wanted to talk about disarmament and he told me that, when he asked Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, who was President of the Conference, for the use of a room in the building, it was refused. It was sad to see the old man disconsolately hanging about the lobbies and trying to buttonhole

delegates. He should not have been placed in such an invidious position. Undeterred by his failure at the Economic Conference, Mr. Henderson proceeded during July to make a round of visits to the principal capitals with a view to initiating private conversations. He started with discussions in London and then went on to Paris, where he was warned of the French determination to insist upon a trial period. He met the German Chancellor and came away from the conversation feeling much disturbed. On his return to London, however, his natural optimism reasserted itself and he said that his conversations with the leading statesmen had convinced him that the only questions that seemed likely to give any trouble were the duration of the Convention and the reduction of land material. There was in reality no ground whatever for such hopes. He had been politely received in the various capitals as an ex-British Foreign Minister and President of the Conference, but Governments did not feel inclined to talk seriously except to other Government representatives. Mr. Henderson, through no fault of his own, was unable to get anything done.

The Conference was now in an extremely critical state. An adjournment had been made to enable private conversations to take place, in order to settle the very serious difficulties that remained. When the General Commission reassembled, the second reading would begin, during which each article would be voted upon. In the event of a Great Power voting against an article of importance, the Conference could hardly continue. I suspected that the Japanese would never sign the British Draft; agreement between the Great Powers of Europe and the United States was essential to getting a Convention.

As the weeks slipped by, the news from Germany became worse and the anxiety in Europe increased. In addition to the internal state of Germany to which I have alluded above, a dead set at Austria was developing. An intensive campaign of wireless propaganda and political pressure, both within and without, was going on and no one knew what the next step would be or whether Herr Hitler would openly attack Austria or forment a revolution in the country.

In the face of all this provocation the attitude of other Governments towards disarmament changed considerably. It was unsafe to disarm in the face of this menace to European peace. The French Government even proposed to demand an investigation, in accordance with Article 213 of the Peace Treaty, into the state of German armaments.

M. Daladier invited British Ministers to come to Paris to discuss the turn of events on September 18th, where they were joined by Mr. Norman Davis. M. Daladier once more put forward his idea of a trial period, which was to last four years, while the Reichswehr was abolished. There was then to be a second period of four years during which the armaments of other States were to be gradually reduced, Germany finally reaching equality of status in the eighth year. No "samples" of the prohibited weapons were to be allowed to Germany during the first period. The French were prepared to carry out substantial disarmament during the second period, provided there was agreement upon a system of permanent and automatic supervision. The French proposals were accepted at this gathering and Italy also agreed to them through diplomatic channels.

This decision was of profound significance, though curiously enough neither our own Ministers nor Mr.

Norman Davis seemed to realise that it made a breakdown inevitable. I cannot say that the three Governments were wrong in their view that, in the face of such provocation from Germany, we could not go on with our original proposals and that actual reduction must be approached with caution. Germany was in a most dangerous condition and no one knew from day to day what would happen next. It would have been useless as well as wrong to ask France to begin disarming immediately and start destroying her material. And yet, to look upon the other side of the picture, it was hardly possible that Germany, just emerging from a revolution, conscious of a returning self-respect and increasing strength, would accept the proposal of a "trial" period. The very word made the proposal hopeless from the beginning; it seemed just like releasing a convict on ticket-of-leave. Moreover the Germans were deeply suspicious that, at the end of the fourth year when the Reichswehr had been completely destroyed and they had been saddled with an army of recruits, the French would say that they were very sorry but the trial period had proved unsatisfactory and they could not proceed to the second period. It was not inconceivable. I think the Governments were entirely right to make changes but the new proposals should have been couched in entirely different language, which might have made them less offensive to German susceptibilities.

The Assembly opened a few days later on September 25th and the Nazi delegates, headed by Baron von Neurath, the Foreign Minister, and Herr Goebbels, Minister for Propaganda, came to their first and last meeting. Herr Dollfuss came too, and his courageous stand for Austrian independence made him a most popular figure. When he went to the tribune to speak

he received a prolonged ovation; the significance of this anti-Nazi demonstration was not lost upon the German delegates. In conversation with Mr. Geoffrey Knox, President of the Saar Governing Commission, Herr Dollfuss jokingly remarked that their two lives would probably require the highest insurance premium in Europe. Events were soon to justify it. A few months later the speaker was lying dead in his Chancery, brutally murdered by Austrian Nazis, while Mr. Knox continued to live a charmed life but fortunately escaped assassination. The Germans were in truth treated tactlessly at Geneva and suffered almost complete social ostracism, which did not increase their regard for the League. The error was a fatal one, for they felt they were still being treated as outcasts. Had Sir Eric Drummond been there with his great political experience I do not think that he would ever have allowed it to happen.

During the Assembly Baron von Neurath was informed of the Paris conversations and he protested strongly against the decisions, being particularly insistent that they must be permitted "samples" from the beginning. The French and British Governments would not give way. Signor Mussolini, who was always a realist, was in favour of giving them samples, remarking that they probably had them already and we should get some credit for the concession.

The Bureau met on October 9th but adjourned in order that the conversations between the Great Powers might continue. There was much diplomatic activity but neither side seemed prepared to give way on any of the important issues. In the remaining days there was little to do but sit about in hotels and speculate upon the probable result when the Bureau met on October 14th. There were many who thought that the Germans

were bluffing and that they could be worn down by the same tactics that proved so successful in the critical discussions in May. One heard people say that the strong hand was what the German really respected. But the situation was now radically different and the Germans felt far more sure of themselves. I am bound to say that I never thought they were bluffing and I was convinced that they meant to see it through. Two days before the meeting General Schonheinz, who had succeeded General von Blomberg, came to see me and begged me to believe that the terms were quite unacceptable and that they would have to leave the Conference if they were not modified. One powerful factor in making the British, French and Italian Delegations believe that the Germans would yield at the last moment was the supreme confidence of the United States delegation. This was due to the fact that some of their journalists, who were in close touch with the Germans, were prepared to vouch for the fact that they would crumple up, if pressed hard enough. Diplomatic negotiations of this sort are like two swordsmen fighting in a dark room. One never quite knows what the other means to do. Some vague hint, some indiscreet word may point this way or that, but there is nothing certain. I have often thought that those over-confident American predictions as to Germany's intentions just turned the scale. Without them we might have made some minor concessions which would have saved Germany's face.

The fateful meeting took place on October 14th. When I entered the room I met the German Admiral, a friend of many years' standing. Labouring under considerable emotion, he told me that they had made their decision. They were quite prepared to go out into the wilderness, so long as they preserved their honour.

Germany could no longer be insulted and ordered about as she had been in the past. Sir John Simon, speaking with his usual lucidity, explained the views of the associated Governments and he was firmly supported by Mr. Norman Davis, M. Paul-Boncour and the Italian delegate. In reply Baron von Rheinbaben, representing Germany in the absence of Herr Nadolny, confined himself to saying that the German attitude was determined by two claims: that there must be real and substantial disarmament on the part of the heavily-armed Powers and that there must be the immediate and practical application of equality of rights, the question of quantity being left open for further discussion. He added that he would report the debate to his Government.

The meeting broke up at 12.30. At 3 p.m. Mr. Henderson received a telegram from Baron von Neurath announcing that Germany would withdraw from the Conference. The same evening a manifesto was issued in Berlin announcing Germany's withdrawal from the League and Herr Hitler broadcast a speech, justifying Germany's attitude but leaving the door open for further discussions on disarmament.

The Conference had received a mortal blow.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE FINAL RUPTURE

Negotiations with Germany outside the Conference. M. Barthou causes a rupture. Stormy final session: M. Barthou's amazing speech. The end. Reflections. The air problem. Mr. Henderson.

HERR HITLER was careful not to embitter the German withdrawal by provocative speeches and both he and Baron von Neurath stated that they were still prepared to discuss disarmament in a friendly spirit. The problem before the Conference was the next step. Was it worth while to go on without Germany or should discussions continue with her outside the Conference? The French were determined to proceed. In perfect seriousness they urged that there was no necessity for Germany to be there as she was already disarmed by treaty and it was merely a question as to what measures of disarmament the other States were prepared to carry out by mutual agreement. This was in direct conflict with the principle of equality of rights and Sir John Simon was compelled to intimate to M. Paul-Boncour that we did not regard the joint declaration of October 14th as unalterable and, as that policy had failed, we must now seek other means of getting agreement with Germany. Signor Mussolini was convinced of the uselessness of proceeding without Germany and so was the United States delegation. Mr. Henderson, the President of the Conference, sided with the French and Little Entente and insisted that one or two Committees should continue to sit. The Italian delegate refused to be represented and we were extremely lukewarm. After two or three adjournments and a threat of resignation by the President of the Conference, the Bureau decided to adjourn until it was considered

useful to meet again, while parallel and supplementary negotiations were to be conducted through diplomatic channels.

From November, 1933, until the following April there ensued a perfect torrent of diplomatic notes and conversations between Germany, France, Italy and ourselves, the majority of which were made public. It would be tedious to attempt to set forth the various points of view in detail, but some idea of the German one is necessary to the story. Herr Hitler did not ask for a reduction in the armaments of the heavily-armed Powers for 5 years, as he recognised that they did not mean to disarm. For Germany he wanted an army of 300,000 men with 12 months service, and he pointed out that this was only 20 per cent of the effectives of France and her allies. He was prepared to complete the transformation of the Reichswehr into a conscript army in 4 or 5 years. He would undertake to build only 6-ton tanks and guns up to 6-inch, the number of which could be discussed. In the air he did not ask for parity but for an air force not exceeding 30 per cent of the combined forces of her neighbours or 50 per cent of the French air force, whichever were the less. He offered to exclude bombers, if other States built no more, and have aeroplanes capable of only two hours' flight.

The question of the so-called "para-military" formations, i.e., the Storm Troops, the S.S., and the Labour Corps was one to which the French attached major importance and they insisted upon their either being counted as effectives, together with the militarised police, or abolished. Herr Hitler maintained that they were a bulwark against Communism which he could not give up, and that they were unarmed and had no military character whatsoever. He even compared them on one

occasion to the Salvation Army! He was also ready to accept permanent and automatic supervision for his armaments and the fact that the para-military formations were not armed could therefore be verified by an International Commission. No one could say that his terms were not moderate and even generous. He agreed to place himself in a position of permanent inferiority, with international inspection to verify his undertaking, and he did not demand any reductions from other States for five years. His offer ought to have been accepted. Except for "samples," which he insisted on, he had practically agreed to the terms of October 14th. What more could the French expect? Signor Mussolini thought they ought to be accepted and that no time should be lost, but the French attitude remained extremely stiff.

On January 31st the British Government issued a memorandum, upon which we had been working for some time, which tried to reconcile the opposing points of view and secure a settlement. The only important objection of the German Government to our proposals was that it did not concede equality of rights in the air but, like the British Draft Convention, proposed a further inquiry into methods of air limitation before Germany should be allowed any aeroplanes. It was distasteful to the French, who complained of the inadequacy of the British proposals for consultation in the event of a breach of the Convention and demanded guarantees with sanctions for failure to carry out its terms. They strongly opposed any German rearmament.

It became extremely doubtful whether the French now wanted disarmament on any terms. As the result of the Stavisky case, the indignation of the public against politicians and the Parliamentary system as a whole

culminated in riots in the Place de la Concorde on February 6th, 1934, when the Chamber of Deputies was almost stormed and several men belonging to ex-Service Associations were shot down, when the hard-pressed *Gardes Mobiles* opened fire. A National Government with M. Doumergue as Premier and six ex-Prime Ministers in the Cabinet was formed. M. Daladier and M. Pierre Cot, the two men who had fought hardest for agreement with Germany, were for the time being completely discredited. The tone of the later French notes towards Germany, under the influence of the new Government, became noticeably harsher. On March 28th the German Government published their Defence estimates for the year, which showed very large increases; 40 per cent for the Army, 20 per cent for the Navy and 250 per cent for the Air. The fact was extremely disturbing and the tactlessness—a quality in which German Governments have a unique pre-eminence—of publishing them during these critical negotiations was extraordinary. I asked a friend of mine in the German Delegation what the reason was. He said publication was a matter of routine and at the appointed date the ultra-methodical Treasury officials published the figures and no one had the sense to hold them up. The explanation, so characteristic of the woodenness of Prussian officialdom, bore the stamp of truth. It has never been repeated. On April 17th a memorandum, signed by M. Barthou, the new Foreign Minister, was handed to a member of the British Embassy in Paris, taking these increases as a pretext for a general indictment of the German Government and for breaking off all further negotiations. The cynical explanation of the German Foreign Office, that the increases in the Air estimates were only intended to develop civil aviation and make

some provision for passive air defence, roused even greater general mistrust.

Yet the more one studied the Hitler proposals the more favourable they appeared. The German Chancellor had again raised his bid but, after all that had passed, they were terms which the French should have accepted with alacrity. It was the story of the Sibylline books over again. One explanation may be found in the serious internal political situation in France. The older generation was in charge and were once more dictating the policy. It was believed that strong government was necessary and that it was no time for acquiescing in any German rearmament. To what extent the General Staff were pressing for a rupture I do not know, but I gained the impression that leading French politicians and soldiers were regarding the future almost with complacency. The Maginot line was nearly finished; the French Army was strong and well supplied with material. The idea was generally accepted that it was only necessary to hang on a bit longer and the Nazi façade would collapse, both financially and politically. It is not easy to understand French credulity in this respect.

But there was, perhaps, a deeper reason. They profoundly mistrusted German promises and felt that they could not destroy their splendid military machine upon the faith of a German pledge to keep within a given limit. They had ceased to press for "security" and were now only interested in guarantees of execution. It was in fact their last ditch. If they could have induced the United States and ourselves to agree to enforce collective sanctions against a State that had exceeded the limits imposed by the Convention, they would perhaps have gone forward and negotiated on the Hitler offers.

But when these were not forthcoming, they persuaded themselves that they were quite strong enough to deal with Germany for many years to come and that long before German armaments could get on equal terms with them the Nazi régime would have vanished.

I could understand this attitude, which was in accordance with French mentality, even though I disagreed with it. Events have proved that their optimism was misplaced. In any case it seemed to me that a Germany controlled was safer than a Germany uncontrolled by any Convention, which in the long run might be fatal to France. Could the British Government have done anything to avert the catastrophe? I do not think any pressure would have availed, as the French mind was made up. The one thing we could have done was to have given them guarantees of sanctions in case of a serious breach of the Convention. This would have satisfied the French, who would have felt that it would not have been left to themselves alone to coerce Germany, if she were exceeding the limits imposed by the Convention. I did what I could to press this view but the Government felt unable to give any undertaking beyond the promise of "consultation," which might mean anything or nothing.

The rupture of the negotiations contained in the letter of April 17th was a staggering blow to the Conference. It was left to M. Barthou to administer the "knock-out" at the meeting of the General Commission on May 29th. The date had been fixed some time beforehand and the failure of the intensive negotiations lasting from November till April cast a gloom over the proceedings. Every one felt that we were attending the final obsequies of the Conference. Nearly every Foreign Minister in Europe was in his place. The proceedings opened with a

speech by the President, from which the usual optimism had disappeared, and was followed by Mr. Norman Davis and M. Litvinoff, the latter proposing that the Conference should convert itself into a Peace Conference in permanent session. Sir John Simon then made a speech stating the bare truth that we were confronted with the impossibility of reconciling the present German claim to rearmament with the French insistence on the terms presented on October 14th. He said that the British Government had done its best to find a compromise but had failed. It was no use going on with discussions ranging over the whole field of disarmament and if we could not get agreement on the major points we must try to secure a more modest Convention upon the issues about which there was a possibility of agreement.

M. Barthou, the French Foreign Minister, rose to reply. He was new to the polite and restrained tone of the debates and seemed to imagine that it was a suitable platform for a knockabout partisan speech such as he was accustomed to deliver in the French Chamber. It was quite indescribable by those who heard it and no account did justice to its irony, its insolence and its passion. His main object seemed to be to widen the breach that he himself had created when he broke off all disarmament negotiations on April 17th. He attacked Germany in no measured terms and said that France would never agree to rearmament of any kind whatsoever, and was particularly rude to Sir John Simon and to the British Government. He sarcastically alluded to the Foreign Secretary as his *presque ami*. The Commission rocked with laughter at his witty and audacious sallies but his own delegation was obviously disturbed. As I listened to that high-pitched voice, rising at times almost to a scream, I was irresistibly reminded of the

harrowing exchanges between M. Poincaré and Lord Curzon. M. Barthou was of the Poincaré generation and followed him in an instinctive distrust and dislike of British policy. He received the applause of other delegations and of the French Press who liked to see some one stand up to Great Britain, but it was dearly bought.

Two or three days later when the Bureau was trying to hammer out a resolution as to the future work in a situation which, as the President said, was practically hopeless, he accused Mr. Henderson of partiality, in a speech full of jeers at most of the members of the Bureau. Mr. Henderson was thoroughly roused. A Labour leader who had served his apprenticeship in public speaking at street corners has no lack of vocabulary when feeling is running high. Trembling with indignation, he tore M. Barthou's accusations to pieces, and most of those present rejoiced in the castigation. Even his own countrymen felt that he had gone too far. A joke was a joke, but an attack upon two prominent English public men in a week was too much for the strongest French stomach. They were full of apologies for him. They said he was a *Béarnais* and that they always talked in this extravagant fashion; that he was a *grand Parlementaire* and enjoyed the cut and thrust of debate; that he was irritated by Sir John Simon's speech; and similar excuses.

M. Piétri, the French Minister of Marine, a man of pleasant manners and tactful disposition, was hastily despatched from Paris to try to retrieve the situation. But the *gaffes* of M. Barthou had hopelessly compromised the French plans and they were quite unable to secure what they so much desired, namely, a continuance of the Conference so that they could arrange a number of regional Pacts with a view to encircling Germany under

the guise of discussions on "security." They had already managed to bring the Balkan Entente within their orbit, and active negotiations were then in progress concerning an Eastern European Pact. My own impression was that M. Barthou's tactics were deliberate. He was turning away from British friendship and was obsessed with the importance of securing an alliance with Soviet Russia. I wrote at the time:—

"How incongruous is this new setting to partners! Towards the close of the last century this progressive Western democracy, grandchild of the Revolution, made an alliance with an iron-handed autocracy with which there could not have been the slightest sentimental tie in common, in order to meet the German menace. To-day for the same reasons the same respectable and bourgeois democracy turns in its need to grasp the hand of the Communist International."

M. Barthou's policy contained, in my view, two fatal blunders: his brusque rupture of the disarmament negotiations on April 17th, 1934, and his championship of the Franco-Soviet Pact. The latter was ostensibly intended as an Eastern European Pact, which would be open to Germany to sign. Sir John Simon indeed gave it his blessing as being within the letter of the Covenant. But it was a thinly disguised military alliance and the two steps that he took may have almost incalculable consequences.

In private life M. Barthou was a very likeable man with abundant vivacity and an inexhaustible flow of witty stories. He was a scholar, a historian, a bibliophile and a collector. His library of first editions was sold for a phenomenal sum after his death. After leaving Geneva he went on a triumphal tour through the countries of the Little Entente, though his reception in Poland was not

quite so cordial. He was trying to collect support for the Franco-Soviet Pact. In appalling heat he went through a perfect orgy of speech-making and receptions which would have tried the stamina of a much younger man, yet his vitality was equal to every demand. In appearance he was small and wizened with a scanty beard and pince-nez. He was not impressive to look at but no one who had contact with him could doubt his great ability or his devotion to his country. It was sad to think that he should have been allowed to bleed to death through amateur first aid after the bomb outrage at Marseilles.

The session of the General Commission closed on June 8th and a resolution was passed inviting the Bureau to seek the solution of outstanding problems by any means which they deemed appropriate and thus to secure, without prejudice to the private conversations between Governments, the return of Germany to the Conference. This in fact laid the responsibility of any revival of the Conference upon the Bureau but emphasised, as Mr. Eden insisted, that the return of Germany was essential. A number of Committees were appointed but neither Italy, Hungary nor Japan would serve upon them in the absence of Germany and they soon came to an end. The Bureau held one or two more formal meetings but the meeting of the General Commission just recorded was in fact the end of the Conference. It never met again.

There is one subject indirectly connected with the Conference of which I have hitherto made no mention, the question of manufacture of and trade in arms. They are two entirely distinct problems. Control of manufacture by means of inspection would help to ensure the observance of a Disarmament Convention; control of trade would mean much for the peace of the world and is

to my mind the more important of the two. It was my fate to be one of the representatives of the Government on a number of Commissions on this subject at Geneva from 1927 onwards, including prolonged discussions at the Conference itself. The problem is extremely technical and involved: though it has engendered a good deal of heat from time to time, I have forborne to inflict its many ramifications upon the reader.

There is one other subject of capital importance, the Air, which I have reserved until the end. Here I am compelled for obvious reasons to observe considerable reticence. The policy pursued by the Government with regard to the Air was subjected to a number of queer cross-currents, which prevented its being a wholehearted one. For this the Government and some members of it in particular were very much blamed. I am obviously unable to speak freely, so I shall confine myself to telling the story as it was known to the public at the time with the addition of a few comments of my own.

During the Preparatory Commission there was much talk about the menace of the air and its connection with civil aviation was becoming apparent. But the drastic measure of the abolition of the bombing aeroplane, though mentioned, did not find general agreement. There was a provision for limiting the number of planes and their total horse-power. There was also a mild article under which the Contracting Parties agreed to refrain from embodying military features in civil machines and from subsidising air lines for strategic reasons or allowing military personnel to be employed in civil flying. The value of the limitation of numbers and total horse-power entirely depended upon what figures were entered in the Convention and the provision about civil aviation would obviously depend upon the

good faith of each Contracting Party. The proposed solution was quite inadequate.

Let me try to examine the problem objectively. Air bombing is only a prolongation of artillery fire: the projectile is carried and dropped on the target instead of being propelled from a gun by an explosive charge. Anxiety, however, about its drastic limitation, if not complete abolition, is aroused owing to the enormous destruction that it can achieve and to the exposure of the civil population to attack. To such a degree has it developed that an entirely new strategy of winning a war by destroying the morale of the civil population and forcing it to capitulate may now be feasible against a densely populated and highly industrialised country. Its complete success, however, depends upon a number of assumptions. It presupposes, first of all, a great air superiority on the part of the aggressor. Conversely, if the two air forces are even approximately equal, the attacking bombers will be met by the defender's fighters as well as by anti-aircraft defence from the ground, the efficiency of which is at least ten times greater than it was during the War. I do not think that Mr. Baldwin's famous statement that "the bomber will always get through" is necessarily correct. Furthermore, there is the weapon of retaliation. Admittedly it is not an absolute defence but it does seem that the aggressor will be less inclined to bomb large cities indiscriminately if he knows that exactly the same treatment will be meted out to his own. Geography also enters into the question. The distance from the Rhine to London is far less than from the Kentish coast to Berlin. Our observers could only report a German raiding force a few minutes before it is over the capital; whereas for an air attack upon Berlin there would be ample warning. The big towns in

Northern Italy are much exposed to air attack from Eastern France, while Italy has no comparable targets at a similar distance from her frontier. London is of course extremely vulnerable not only from its size but its nearness to the coast. We have far more to lose than any other European country from air attack.

How then is this new danger to civilisation to be met? The most drastic method of all would be to get other countries to agree to abolish the air entirely, the gift of which, as Mr. Winston Churchill once said, mankind has proved so unworthy. This would be decisive, for the existence of a single aeroplane would be evidence of bad faith, for which severe sanctions could be provided. There is, however, a rooted objection to hampering progress or "putting the clock back." I have never seen the force of this argument. The world was a very good place before aeroplanes came and we got on well enough without them. The price for the removal of this horrible threat that hangs over the head of Europe would certainly be worth paying. There is no other means of gaining absolute security.

The next alternative is the abolition of air forces. This at once opens up the whole question of civil aviation. At the Disarmament Conference France, Germany, Italy, the United States and Russia all spoke in favour of abolition and naturally all the small Powers agreed. How far Germany really meant it I am by no means sure, as her representatives always became difficult when civil aviation was under discussion. They were determined to keep theirs intact. Yet effective international control of it is vital to the scheme.

It is possible to convert a civil machine into a bomber in a very few hours by fitting bomb-racks and bomb-sights. It is apparent that, if the civil machines are

sufficiently fast and can climb rapidly, they become a vast reserve for military purposes. When the Tardieu plan was launched in February, 1932, the French Delegation produced a very complete scheme of internationalisation, which we declared ourselves unable to accept. The whole of European aviation was to be controlled, at least as regards trunk lines, by an International Board, which would be responsible for running them on a purely commercial basis. It would undoubtedly make for economy and would eliminate construction with an eye to military purposes or the running of strategical lines. It would be impossible to accumulate reserves either of men or pilots in any one country, though of course, when war broke out, the planes actually in the country might be requisitioned. The constitution of the Board would naturally be a subject of considerable controversy and the allotment of the construction of new machines to the various countries would be of crucial importance, as these factories would be the sole source of supply. It is easy to pick holes in the plan, but it certainly seemed to me a workable scheme.

The British Government would only go as far as the registration of civil machines plus international inspection to see that they did not exceed the prescribed limits. Eventually, however, in the British Draft Convention, it was admitted that the question of civil aviation and the abolition of Naval and Military aircraft must be further examined before the second Disarmament Conference. Otherwise our proposals were little in advance of those made by the Preparatory Commission.

A third alternative is the prohibition of the act of bombing. It is also bound up with the question of civil aviation and, unless that is solved, this prohibition would hardly be effective. It has, however, one priceless

advantage, which applies equally to the abolition of air forces. If bombing is forbidden, the construction of bombing aircraft or bombs or bomb-sights and training in bombing would be a breach of the Convention. Any attempt to do one of these things ought to be discovered by international inspection. No doubt, after war broke out, civil machines could be converted in time and pilots could be trained. But this would involve at least some weeks or months, and no Power would risk such a breach until it was able to do it on a fairly large scale. It follows, therefore, that *the aggressor would be unable to deliver a mass attack at zero hour.* It is a favourite argument of those opposed to the abolition of bombing that nations will not keep faith, when it becomes a matter of life and death. I think this may be quite true. The great advantage, however, of this prohibition is that, whether they do so or not, it will be physically impossible to deliver that instant and overwhelming attack which haunts Governments and General Staffs to-day. Of all nations in the world we should have the most to gain from the abolition.

At the beginning of the Conference nearly every State was in favour of the abolition of bombing, but we remained silent. I quite understand the importance that the Air Ministry attached to the technique of bombing, after notice had been given, in civil disturbances in Iraq and on the North-West Frontier. But I could never see why it bulked so large as to prevent our acceptance of prohibition outright and, even in our own Draft Convention of 1933, persuade us to make an exception in favour of bombing "for police purposes in certain outlying regions." It is true, as I have previously mentioned, that Mr. Eden was authorised by the Cabinet to announce later on that we were prepared to waive this, if it was an

obstacle to agreement. We had, however, persisted too long in trying to retain bombing in some form or another in the face of almost unanimous international agreement. It completely mystified our friends and was damaging to the Government. We were actually attaching more importance to preserving the amenities of being bombed for a few Pathan and Iraqi villages and to keeping control of civil aviation in our own hands than to joining the rest of the civilised world in a practical attempt to remove the menace of the bombing aeroplane.

In conversation with a great international lawyer for whose character I have a great respect, he said to me once that treaties are only likely to be kept if they are supported by public opinion, and that lawyers will always be able to find a respectable legal reason for their non-observance. I am afraid that my experience of the last five years leads me to put very little faith in their sanctity. Prohibitions which rest only on good faith are likely to fail. For similar reasons I have little confidence in trying to humanise war. The experience of the Great War and of the use of gas by the Italians in Abyssinia shows that, when a nation's back is to the wall, treaties are likely to become scraps of paper. Mr. Winston Churchill in the *World Crisis* wrote "When it was all over, torture and cannibalism were the only expedients which these great, civilised, Christian nations had not employed—and they were of doubtful utility." If bombing is to be prohibited, it must not depend for success upon moral obligations alone. I have shown, I hope, that, combined with efficient international inspection, it may be fairly effective.

In saying this I am aware of the fact that Germany was able to create a secret Air Force during the years 1933-4. But it must be remembered that international

inspection did not exist and I am confident that the then German Air Force was then in no condition to carry out bombing attacks on a large scale against a Great Power. Her performance was a remarkable one but the pilots could have had no practical training in bombing and, as events in Spain have shown, her planes have developed grave defects owing to the necessity for their construction to be based largely on theory instead of practical experience. To use a technical expression, they went to production off the drawing-board.

In the story that I have written of the Disarmament Conference with its cross-currents, its insincerities and its passions, I have tried to hold the balance true between the conflicting aims of the various countries. It was always my opinion that it was doomed to failure from the beginning owing to the political conditions in Europe, which I have tried to describe. We began in fact at the wrong end; it was international relations that needed disarming first, the rest might have followed. Twice, I think, it was just possible that we might have snatched an agreement, but the moments were fleeting and no one had the courage to give the necessary lead. It would indeed have been almost a miracle if we had succeeded. One great obstacle was the attempt to hold a conference of some sixty States. The number was quite unmanageable and the small States wasted a good deal of time, produced some friction and added to the inevitable intrigues, without being of any real assistance to the essence of the problem, which was the reduction of the armaments of the Great Powers. For the success of the Conference it did not really matter what the minor Powers' views on disarmament were or in fact whether they themselves disarmed. The Great Powers could usually prevent them from fighting and bilateral agree-

ments with their neighbours could preserve an equilibrium. If another Conference ever meets, it will be essential to restrict the numbers to 8 or 10 and to ignore any claims to attend based on prestige.

If disarmament is again discussed, it must be approached on entirely different lines. The Conference failed because the necessary political conditions for the creation of a feeling of security did not exist. A contributory cause was the fact that every scheme was overwhelmed by an infinity of intricate detail and hair-splitting. The only hope for saving Europe from the armaments race that is now in progress is to approach disarmament in stages.

The first might consist in a "gentleman's agreement" among the Great Powers of Europe for an armaments truce. This would entail a declaration of their programmes and an undertaking not to increase their armaments beyond that point. That is as far as States would be prepared to go at present. There would be outcries from both the Right and the Left that one could not rely upon good faith. It is certain that there is nothing else to rely on.

The race is largely caused by secrecy; no one knows how many divisions or aeroplanes Germany intends to have or France or Russia. Italy, hard pressed financially, is feverishly increasing her armaments to the utmost limit, because she dare not stop. If secrecy could be ended and a voluntary limitation accepted, the tension would relax. If this succeeded, there might in course of time come further stages. I do not consider the idea of some limitation of armaments fantastic, provided it is kept on simple lines and the discussions are confined to the Great Powers.

So far as the chief causes of the failure of the Confer-

ence are concerned, they can be put in a sentence. It was the impossibility of reconciling French demands for security with the German demand for equality of rights. The French were afraid of the future and refused to wipe out the Treaty of Versailles. The Germans declined to perpetuate it and ultimately destroyed it themselves. I do not desire to hunt for scapegoats, for no one Power or group of Powers was the sole cause of the failure, but those who have read thus far will have appreciated that I cannot acquit France of a fair share of the blame. Holding the views that she did—and, if I had been a Frenchman, I should probably have shared them—I cannot see why she ever entered the Disarmament Conference at all or took the most prominent part in initiating the preliminary discussions, unless it was that she hoped to get further guarantees of security from ourselves and the U.S.A. She certainly never intended to disarm, until it was too late; and the German terms kept ticking up all the time, like a taxi-cab that is waiting at the door.

It was the irony of fate that, just when men took the helm who saw the need to settle with Germany, the Nazi Revolution, fruit of past French intransigence, occurred and made moderation among French statesmen very difficult, if not virtually impossible. Yet, if their immediate responsibility is great for not agreeing with Germany when her terms were modest, the ultimate one is heavier still. It was M. Poincaré and his associates who failed to give the moderate men in Germany a chance and drove her to desperation from which emerged a leader of genius who in four years restored the glories of the German Reich and made her again a great military Power. When one looks back upon what might have been, the blindness of French statesmen is almost incredible. But, when all the harsh criticisms have been

made, there is one supreme thing that cannot be said of her—that she desired or ever would desire to go to war. In that knowledge much may be forgiven her. What a burden would be lifted off the shoulders of Europe if the same could be said of the totalitarian States!

The tale of the Conference shows Germany in a favourable light. In view of the promises of the Allies and as a matter of justice her case was unanswerable. It is of course easier to play a game if one holds nearly all the cards. After they had withdrawn from the Conference, Herr Hitler continued to show remarkable moderation in his offers of permanent military inferiority vis-à-vis France. They were rejected because French statesmen did not trust Germany to keep her word. Yet the conditions were such that, if she did not, France would always have the whip-hand, because her superior strength would have allowed her to intervene before Germany could have got level. Personally I believe that the offers of the Führer were sincere. But even at the worst, a controlled and limited German rearmament must always have been safer for France than one without any check at all. In scrutinising Germany's conduct in the Conference, I can find little that is deserving of criticism. It was her actions outside that created the lack of confidence.

I have not spared our own Government, when I thought that they had failed, but I had exceptional opportunities for observing their shortcomings. I think that impartial international opinion would say that we were the real leaders of the Conference and worked most unselfishly for its success. If in a few respects we were not always "on the side of the angels," it was because we had disarmed so much and our Services were so starved and neglected that we could not afford

to accept some proposals which would be peculiarly damaging to the country's interests. I certainly never noticed any other delegation being so self-sacrificing, not even the heavily-armed ones who could afford to give something away. Paradoxical as it may seem, our own unilateral disarmament was a constant embarrassment during the discussions. On some issues we made grave mistakes. We ought to have accepted permanent and automatic supervision from the very beginning, instead of ungraciously conceding it at the end. But we were not alone; the United States took the same line, not to mention Germany, Italy and Japan. We ought to have agreed to the complete abolition of bombing and the international control of civil aviation early in the Conference instead of a grudging half-consent at the end. I think we were right to refuse the early French demands for unlimited "security" but at the end we should have given the guarantees of sanctions in the case of a serious breach of the Convention that the French asked for. But these were not the rocks upon which the Conference was shipwrecked.

Criticism after the event must not weigh in the balance against the great constructive and disinterested attempts that we made time after time to achieve a positive result. And this particularly applied to the constant efforts we made to bring the French and German points of view nearer together. I have no sympathy with the campaign of depreciation and criticism that emanated from certain quarters at home. I do not believe that any responsible political party would have acted very differently, if they had been in possession of all the facts. For the sentimental spectator it is very easy to be heroic and to urge taking "risks for peace," as the popular cry then was. But Governments, of whatever political

colour, have a responsibility for the safety of a great Empire and they cannot afford to give way to ignorant clamour. Nothing in the conduct by the Labour Government of disarmament questions or of their attitude at the Three Party Committee suggested that they would go very much farther than the National Government on major questions except that they would probably have been willing to give France more substantial guarantees of security. They, like the National Government, had their Right Wing as well as their Left. Sir John Simon came in for a good deal of criticism, much of which was unfair. I have tried in an earlier chapter to sum up my estimate of him as a Foreign Secretary. He certainly worked hard and took endless trouble. But he had too many irons in the fire. He was constantly absent to attend Cabinet meetings, to make speeches to his constituents or to be in his place in the House of Commons. And there was the whole work of the Foreign Office to do as well. He was hampered by lukewarmness among a section of his colleagues and never seemed able to drive home a big policy in the Cabinet or at Geneva. And yet he had at his elbow the late Mr. Alan Leeper, in charge of disarmament in the Foreign Office, who championed it with the fire and vigour of a Crusader. The material was available. Sir John Simon had sound Liberal instincts but, lawyer-like, he would search for compromises and agreements when what was wanted was bold leadership. He was too clever and too balanced to seek a martyr's crown. Taking it all in all, the real criticism I make of him is that he failed to take a strong enough line in Whitehall.

Mr. Eden, of whom I shall speak again, won his spurs at the Conference. His handling of difficult situations gained him a great reputation for sincerity and diplo-

matic skill. Foreigners liked him and responded to the enthusiasm for the League and for world peace which inspired him.

Of other delegations I will only say that the Italian and United States delegations worked wholeheartedly for disarmament. They were always ready to support any reasonable proposal and did more than most to try to make the Conference a success. Mr. Norman Davis, Mr. Hugh Gibson, Mr. Hugh Wilson, Signor Grandi, Signor Rosso and the Marquis de Soragna will always be gratefully remembered for their close co-operation with us. During the Conference I had most cordial relations with soldiers of other delegations. I treasure, in particular, memories of years of close friendship with General (now Field-Marshal) von Blomberg (German), General Réquin, Colonel Lucien, Captain Vautrin and Captain Vialet (French), Colonel Strong (United States), General Benitez (Spanish), General van Tuinen and General Baron van Voorst tot Voorst (Dutch), Captain Ruspoli (Italian Navy), and General Nygren (Swedish).

With the gradual fading out of the Conference, Mr. Arthur Henderson's work was done. I have felt bound to say more than once that he was too optimistic, that he did not, I feel sure, always understand the ramifications of the subject or measure forces correctly. Furthermore, he did not play very much of a rôle in negotiations behind the scenes, but this was partly due to the strained relations between him and Ministers of the National Government in the early part of the Conference. His extremely indifferent health was naturally responsible for a great deal of this. But his courage was wonderful. Many times, as he sat in the Presidential chair, I watched his haggard face, his tired eyes and trembling limbs and wondered if the end might not come very soon. He had set his

heart on success and he prodigally spent his health and strength to achieve it.

He was not a clever man but he always seemed to me honest and sincere. He had a natural shrewdness which enabled him to hold his own in relations with much quicker thinking men than himself. He also had plenty of determination. One wonders, if his health had allowed, what he would have done on his return to political life. I believe that some Ministers suspected that he would use his knowledge of the inner working of the Conference to lead a party attack upon the Government in the House of Commons. But they did him an injustice. I think he wanted to work quietly for peace and had no desire to return to the fray. He held strong views on his duties of impartiality and I do not believe he would ever have turned them to party ends.

He died on October 20th, 1935. As I stood in the chancel of Westminster Abbey three days later, where all the great men in public life were assembled, and, as I listened to the beautiful and moving funeral service, it seemed to me that it was a fitting requiem for this brave and simple man, who had given his life in the cause of international peace.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE SAAR PLEBISCITE

Murder of Dr Dollfuss. Assassination of King Alexander and M. Barthou. Jugoslav-Hungarian dispute before the Council. Organising the Saar International Force. Mr. Eden. The politician and the soldier.

HAVING tried to describe the long-drawn-out disarmament negotiations which were finally killed by M. Barthou on April 17th, 1935, I must touch upon some events in 1934, which have a certain relevance.

The German campaign against Austria had steadily increased in intensity. The Austrian Nazis became more and more active in Austria and bands of them were maintained in camps in Germany near the Austrian Frontier. Meanwhile Signor Mussolini became increasingly anxious in view of his firm determination not to allow Austria to become a German province. On two occasions France, Great Britain and Italy issued a joint declaration that Austrian independence must be maintained. On June 14th and 15th, 1934, the Führer and the Duce had a meeting in Venice where the fate of Austria was discussed, and Signor Mussolini, upon whom the Führer then made a very unfavourable impression, believed he had succeeded in extracting an undertaking to cease Nazi propaganda and the fomenting of revolution in Austria.

On July 25th Herr Dollfuss was murdered in the Chancery by Austrian Nazis, who nearly succeeded in effecting a successful *coup d'état*. This act produced a thrill of horror throughout Europe, where Herr Dollfuss's courageous stand for his country's independence had made him a popular figure. The fact that his

assassins had denied him in his last hours the spiritual comfort of the Church and the presence of a doctor added to the revolting nature of the crime.

Mussolini's reply to this outrage was to move three Army Corps to the Brenner Pass with the clear intention of entering Austria if the Nazi revolt succeeded or if there was an incursion of German Nazis across the frontier. To add to the dangers of the situation, the Jugoslav Government concentrated troops as well and were equally determined that, if Italian troops marched on Innsbrück, Jugoslav troops would enter Austria too. Fortunately the Gèrman Government saw the necessity of maintaining a correct attitude and the frontier was closed against any possibility of filibustering raids by Austrian Nazis from Germany. There was, however, a good deal of evidence that German Nazi leaders were privy to the conspiracy. Herr Hitler seemed at last to have realised that continued German pressure on Austria would eventually provoke an armed conflict with Italy and it accordingly ceased. As relations between Germany and Italy have gradually improved, some understanding seems to have been arrived at, for neither Signor Mussolini nor the rest of Europe can have many illusions that the ultimate destiny of Austria will be in the arms of Germany.

Two other events occurred during the summer of 1934, which had a decisive influence on the future, the Franco-Soviet Pact and the admission of Soviet Russia to the League. For a year previously the relations between France and Russia had become more cordial, for which M. Herriot was largely responsible, and negotiations were actually opened by M. Barthou and M. Litvinoff at Geneva on May 18th, 1934, as part of the former's policy of encircling Germany. It was a

momentous step for France. Had M. Daladier been in office instead of M. Doumergue and M. Barthou, it may be questioned whether it would ever have been taken, as M. Daladier was convinced of the need for a settlement with Germany. During the last brief and stormy session of the Disarmament Conference, of which M. Barthou was the central figure, discussions had taken place with Sir John Simon and the British Government had been asked to recommend the Eastern European Pact to Italy, Poland and Germany. Sir John Simon secured a very important alteration in the Draft. As it stood, the French and the Russians mutually undertook to render each other assistance in the event of one or other being attacked by another European Power. As the result of Sir John Simon's pressure it was amended to read that France must give the same guarantee to Germany as she gave to Russia and Russia must guarantee Germany as well as France. Neither Germany nor Poland, however, would consider it. Although it is nominally within the framework of the Covenant, it is in fact a defensive alliance, which France may have cause to regret.

The entry of Russia into the League was another instance of the changed outlook of that country. For years her leaders had plastered the League with abuse and had preached world revolution as their chief aim. When M. Litvinoff first came to the Preparatory Commission, his behaviour was quite outrageous, but one could see the influence of the League working and by degrees I think he became perfectly sincere in his belief in it. The fact that Germany and Japan, the two Powers which Soviet Russia had most reason to fear, had left the League made it all the more advantageous for her to seek such security as it offered. During the summer of

1934 the British French and Italian Governments sounded other States as to the desirability of admitting Russia to the League and, after a great deal of rather comical negotiation, Russia was admitted while the Assembly was in session, Holland, Switzerland and the Irish Free State voting against her election. Time brings many changes, but even in this topsy-turvy world it was somewhat remarkable to see M. Litvinoff at the Council table making irreproachable speeches and inviting other States to follow Russia's example in loyalty to the League. It has certainly alleviated the isolation in which she had formerly gloried but had later begun to fear. Her present attitude is correct and even helpful but the future is obscure and, if the pressure upon her, both East and West, were removed we might again be confronted by the promotion of revolution throughout the East and Far East, which a few years ago was the greatest challenge to the security of the Empire which we have had to meet since the War.

One of my most interesting experiences at Geneva was my association with the organisation of the International Force for the plebiscite in the territority of the Saar. According to the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles the Saar coal mines were handed over to France as a compensation for the destruction of the coal mines in the North of France during the War. The control of the territory was vested in a Commission of five, to be appointed by the Council of the League, and at the end of fifteen years a plebiscite was to be taken as to its further destiny. There were three alternatives (a) the maintenance of the *status quo* (b) union with France and (c) union with Germany.

The first chairman of the Governing Commission was M. Rault, a Frenchman who continued from 1920 to

1926. He was followed first by Mr. Stephens, a Canadian, till 1927 and then by two Englishmen, Sir Ernest Wilton 1927-32 and Mr. (now Sir) Geoffrey Knox 1932-35.

Both France and Germany were directly interested in the result of the plebiscite and, over a period of years, there had been a good deal of propaganda; but the French were fighting a losing battle. After the Nazi revolution in 1933 German pressure was redoubled and the pro-German elements were amalgamated into a single party called the Deutsche Front. For a number of years order had been maintained by the presence of 4000 French troops but, as the result of the question being constantly raised in the Council of the League, they had been finally withdrawn in 1927. Owing to the inadequacy of the police the Governing Commission had still the right to call upon French military forces stationed outside the Saar Basin in the event of serious disorder.

The Governing Commission was efficient but autocratic and their rule was naturally unpopular. As the plebiscite drew nearer the tension increased. During the Disarmament Conference Mr. Knox, the Chairman, used to come to Geneva for meetings of the Council when Saar questions were being discussed and I had the opportunity of frequent talks with him. I grew to have a great respect for this fearless, great-hearted Englishman, who with four loyal comrades governed this turbulent and propaganda-ridden territory. I also began to have some understanding of the problems which confronted him.

The greatest anxiety in connection with the plebiscite would obviously be the maintenance of order and the assurance to the electors that the ballot should be secret and free. The gendarmerie consisted of no more than 2000 men and these, like the other German officials, were almost entirely Nazi in sympathy, if not actually members

of the party. Mr. Knox therefore had the choice between a weak and unreliable gendarmerie and calling in French troops. Neither prospect was inviting. If French soldiers were employed to coerce a mob that had got out of hand or to eject from the Saar Territory a mass of Brown-shirts that had broken in from Germany, it might well develop into an armed conflict, of which the end might be war. There were some inconclusive discussions at the Council meetings in the summer, in the course of which Mr. Knox obtained permission to recruit police from neighbouring German-speaking countries and raise another 2000 men. This made me very uneasy. The only men likely to volunteer for such dangerous and unpleasant duty would be the unemployed and the riff-raff of the population, seeing that their services were likely to be dispensed with directly the plebiscite was over. Moreover, how could men learn to be policemen in three months? What reception were they likely to get in the police barracks? Would not every means be employed to induce them to sympathise with the Nazis and so render them as unlikely to do their duty as the police whom they were intended to stiffen?

During the Assembly I took steps to press very strongly the dangers of the situation and not least to the person of Mr. Knox himself. He was surrounded by Nazi spies; his butler and chauffeur had both been arrested. If anything happened to him as the result of the failure of the Council to have adequate strength available in the Saar, the responsibility resting on the British Government would be a very grave one. We could not abandon an Englishman to his fate merely because he was temporarily a League official. It seemed to me then that an International Force was the only way out, though at the time it was little more than a dream. From a purely military

point of view there were risks to a small isolated force but the political advantages largely outweighed it. I knew there would be opposition in London, and I took what steps were open to me to draw attention to the advantage of an International Force.

The situation was somewhat eased by M. Laval becoming Foreign Minister in the place of M. Barthou, who had met a tragic fate at Marseilles on October 9th, 1934, in company with the King of Jugoslavia. M. Laval's attitude was much more conciliatory and he was fully alive to the dangers of the situation. While M. Barthou had been talking of fulfilling his responsibilities and using French troops, M. Laval was determined, if reinforcements had to be sent, to confine them to German-speaking gendarmerie recruited from Alsace and Lorraine, which would be much less provocative. Herr Hitler too had seen possible damage to German interests in a disturbance which would justify French intervention and on November 2nd, Herr Burckel, the German Plenipotentiary for the Saar, had issued orders that no parades of S. A. or S. S. were to take place within forty kilometres of the frontier between January 10th and February 10th. But the excitement grew and the hatred of the people was concentrated upon Mr. Knox, whom they always accused of being pro-French. The Council met on December 5th to consider the final arrangements made by the Saar Committee of the Council. This consisted of Baron Aloisi (Italy) as President, Señor Cantilo (Argentine) and Señor Olivan (Spain). Mr. Eden had in his pocket a Cabinet decision to offer to co-operate in the formation of an International Force if the Council approved. The secret was well kept and Mr. Eden told M. Laval of the offer that he was going to make only a few minutes before the meeting of the Council. The following day the Council decided to

constitute the force and the German Government agreed, after receiving assurances from the British and Italian Governments that neither Russian nor Czechoslovakian troops would be employed. The relief to M. Laval and the French Government was immense.

I arrived at Geneva the following day and, after a long talk with Mr. Eden, immediately proceeded to begin the organisation of the Force. Unofficial suggestions had already been made to the Governments of Sweden and Holland that they should make some contribution and Signor Mussolini had agreed to do so. I was present at a secret meeting of the Council when it was decided to issue formal invitations to the United Kingdom, Italy, Sweden and Holland. Within ten minutes of its close an offer came from Mr. de Valera to send a contingent from the Irish Free State, but it was then too late to consider it.

After considerable discussion with Mr. Knox we decided to recommend a force of 3500, and to suggest that Great Britain and Italy should find 1500 each and that the two other States should each contribute 250. On the ninth the Italian General Visconti Pasca arrived and we sat with Mr. Knox almost continuously in Committee settling a mass of details. I was in constant touch with the War Office and I was frequently reminded of the need of haste if the troops were to be there by December 22nd, the latest possible date according to Mr. Knox. There were no precedents to guide and I realised that we ourselves were creating one of considerable importance. Questions of pay were very thorny as the Italian representative was not content that each contingent should draw its normal rate of pay, which he considered would produce friction. The possibility of soldiers being killed or injured had also to be faced and the pensions or compensation

could only devolve as an obligation upon the Government of the Territory which resulted from the plebiscite. This was a commitment which might or might not be honoured: fortunately the question never arose.

A fund had been created to carry out the plebiscite to which the French and German Governments had each contributed 5,000,000 francs and the Saar Government 2,000,000 francs. It was from this fund that the extra expense of the International Force, over and above the normal cost of the contingents in their own countries, would have to be met. The French Government were so relieved at getting rid of the nightmare of using French troops that they generously defrayed the whole cost of the transport and maintenance of the International troops across French territory, while the German Government performed the same service for the Swedish contingent.

During the discussions it suddenly occurred to me that a whole range of legal problems must also be settled and I was able to obtain the invaluable services of Sir William Malkin, the legal adviser of the Foreign Office, to help in drafting a resolution for the Council. There was firstly the question of the respective spheres of responsibility of the Governing Commission and the Commander-in-Chief, and, following British principles, we made it clear that the Civil Power must be supreme.

The formula was as follows:

"The Governing Commission of the Saar Territory shall continue to bear the responsibility of law and order in the Territory.

"Subject to the military requirements of the situation, and without prejudice to any immediate action that may be necessary in the event of an emergency, the Commander-in-Chief will comply with such requests as

may be made to him by the chairman of the Governing Commission for the intervention of the force for the purpose of maintaining or restoring order."

There was also the question of the immunity of the International Force from prosecution in the Civil Courts, the right of requisitioning accommodation and transport, and the question of offences committed against the International Force by inhabitants of the Territory. All these were settled and incorporated in a draft resolution.

The question of command was one to which the British attached importance and, in conversation with Mr. Eden, we thought it best not to try to negotiate it in Geneva but to make a direct request to Signor Mussolini through the Foreign Office. It had become obvious that the Italians were anxious to secure it but the arguments in our favour were really overwhelming. It was the British Government that had taken the initiative in proposing the International Force and, if the precedent of 1919 were to be followed, the Commander of the force ought to be of the same nationality as the official controlling the plebiscite, i.e., Mr. Knox. Signor Mussolini accepted the situation at once but the Italians at Geneva professed to know nothing about it.

There were other obstacles. Although the Council was in session there seemed to be some mysterious obstructive element determined to prevent the resolution constituting the force being put upon the agenda. This was finally achieved on December 11th but the Saar Committee of the Council had excluded any reference to the appointment of the Commander-in-Chief or the strength of the respective contingents. The Italians admitted that they could not bear the loss of "face" which would follow the public announcement in the

Council room that an Englishman had been appointed. Finally when the Sub-Committee met the Saar Committee, after the Council was over, to dispose of the outstanding business, it was only due to my insistence that Baron Aloisi consented to record formally the decision about the Commander-in-Chief and the strength of the contingents. When he asked the Italian representative how much they were prepared to contribute, he replied, "1500 if an Italian is Commander-in-Chief, otherwise 1300." It was too late to increase the numbers of the others to make good the lost 200 and Mr. Knox agreed to be satisfied with a total force of 3300. I had in fact arranged the numbers unofficially with the Italian, Dutch and Swedish representatives two or three days before. Except for this odd demonstration of protest, both Baron Aloisi and General Visconti Pasca co-operated most cordially. Indeed the work of Baron Aloisi, who conducted all the Saar negotiations with France and Germany, especially with regard to buying back the mines and a number of complicated financial questions, was of a very remarkable character.

Major-General J. S. Brind was selected for the command and it was largely due to his personality that such complete harmony prevailed throughout the International Force. There was no friction of any kind. The presence of the troops made it certain that there would be no disturbance, although feeling ran high.

The plebiscite took place on January 13th, 1935, and out of 528,105 votes cast, 46,613 voted for the *status quo*, 2,214 for union with France and 477,119 or 90.35 per cent for union with Germany. The 40,000 odd voters who pronounced for the *status quo* were Socialists and anti-Nazis who hoped that, if the Hitler régime disappeared, another opportunity would be given to them to vote

The relations deteriorated still further and there were constant incidents as well as charges and counter-charges of acts of terrorism between Italy and Hungary on one side and Jugoslavia on the other. No one could doubt that camps where members of the Oustachi (Croat revolutionary movement) could be trained for acts of terrorism had been established in Italy and Hungary with the full cognizance of the respective Government authorities. There had been an attempt on King Alexander's life at Zagreb in December, 1933, and this and other outrages led irresistibly to the crime of Marseilles.

The murder of the King united the whole of Jugoslavia and the deep divisions of the various parties were forgotten in the mourning of the nation. The Jugoslav Government appealed to the Council of the League and indicted the Hungarian Government as being an accessory to the murder. The case came before the Council on December 7th. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the whole discussion was that the name of Italy was never mentioned. Her connivance was undeniable. The headquarters of the Oustachi movement was in Italy, which was the source of supply of most of the weapons and explosives. The Italian Government even refused to extradite two Oustachis who had been arrested for complicity in the assassination. It is true that the murderers came from a camp in Hungary armed with Hungarian passports but the evidence against Italy as an indirect accomplice was strong.

A great deal of diplomatic pressure must have been applied to secure the exclusion of Italy's name from the indictment. The reason may be found in the Franco-Italian rapprochement which was to be consummated a few weeks later by M. Laval's visit to Rome and a formal

agreement between the two Powers. This was the direct result of the Nazi revolution, as both Powers were feeling the need of Allies against the newly-born aggressive tendencies of Germany. Italy's position during the inquiry was very unpleasant. She had to consent to the full blast of the indignation of the Little Entente being turned upon her weaker ally Hungary, behind whom she was compelled to shelter. She dare not even take a strong line in her defence at Geneva. Jugoslavia was made to realise that, if she pushed things too far and insisted on producing evidence against Italy, she could go to war without any support from France. Equally, no doubt, Italy was forced to warn Hungary that, if Hungarian truculence were to end in a Jugoslav invasion, she would stand alone. In this atmosphere of make-believe the Italian share was ignored while the smaller culprit was solemnly arraigned.

M. Jevtich, the Jugoslav Prime Minister, was able to prove from the confessions of one of the regicides that they had planned the murder at the farm of Janka Puszta, a terrorist camp, to which the Jugoslav Government had in vain drawn the attention of the Hungarian Government some time before. The Hungarian representative could hardly deny the facts but contended that the Hungarian Government was not aware of them. The debate swung to and fro, France and the Little Entente leaping into the fray in passionate championship of their ally and in complete disregard of their supposed impartial position as members of the Council. I have quoted in another chapter how M. Laval began his speech by saying, "In this serious debate, France is wholly on the side of Jugoslavia."

Mr. Eden, then Lord Privy Seal, was asked to accept the thankless and difficult post of rapporteur, which involved

the task of trying to draft an agreed resolution which the Council would accept. The problem was to get sufficient condemnation of Hungarian negligence to satisfy the Jugoslavs without being too severe for Hungary to swallow. For hours a small drafting Committee argued and disputed in Mr. Eden's room. At one moment M. Jevtich got up and said that it was the end and all he could do was to go home and mobilise the army. M. Laval had begged that allowances should be made for him as he had witnessed the assassination and had held the dying King in his arms.

By patience, perseverance and skill Mr. Eden finally succeeded in finding a formula, and about midnight the Council met and waited while the Hungarian representative obtained by telephone the concurrence of his Government to the resolution. Too much praise cannot be given to Mr. Eden for what he accomplished; and every statesman at Geneva was well aware that there was no other man in Europe who could have done it. War could hardly have been avoided if there had been a breakdown.

My work with Mr. Eden in connection with the Saar proved to be, for practical purposes, the end of my association with him at Geneva, for my official life closed a few months later.

The chance of his life came when he was asked, as an Under-Secretary, to undertake the duty of Permanent Minister at the Disarmament Conference. I think he was regarded at first as just a debonair young politician, who talked excellent French and could be trusted to keep things going without friction. But he soon began to show his quality and have his own views. It was seen too that he had ideals about the League and disarmament, born perhaps of his own war experiences, having joined the army at the age of seventeen.

His gaiety, his candour and his personal charm won him hosts of friends at Geneva and made him an excellent negotiator. As time went on he became one of the biggest figures in the Conference and his reputation had spread all over Europe. With the growth of his prestige at home he acquired in an extraordinary degree the support of the Left, who believed that he was in deadly earnest about the League. Indeed he had at one time perhaps the greatest following of any man in the country and, when Lord Privy Seal, his resignation on a matter of principle would have provoked a Cabinet crisis. He became Foreign Secretary at the age of thirty-eight on the collapse of the Hoare-Laval negotiations, and it was his fate to watch the failure of the League and of sanctions to stop an aggression. As faith in the League dwindled, his own popularity inevitably suffered some eclipse.

In the disillusions that followed he has been subjected to two main criticisms. He is, on the one hand, accused of continuing to believe in a system, the unsoundness of which Abyssinia and Manchuria have fully exposed, and, on the other, that he has been weak in his dealings with Italy and Japan and has allowed himself to be overborne by his more isolationist colleagues. The two accusations in a sense cancel each other out. I am sure that he has not lost faith in the ideals of the League but he cannot ignore the blows that it has received or be blind to obvious facts. Like many of the younger Conservatives, his tendencies in internal politics are perhaps Leftward; but he would never compromise with an internationalism that sought to gain peace at the expense of the security of the British Empire. If his diplomacy is not forceful enough for some people, it is because our rearmament has not yet reached a pitch which

will give the firm support that a strong foreign policy requires. The brave days of old when Palmerston could dictate to Europe, backed by prestige alone, are gone for ever. We must have the armaments of our policy.

On the personal side, I will only say that no one could work for him and with him for two years, as I did, without having a great admiration for him as a statesman and leader and the warmest regard for him as a friend. His sympathy and understanding of one's point of view were unfailing.

This brings me to some reflections upon the relations between the politician and the soldier. There is no more widely spread belief in the army, and I may add in most armies, than that the politician is an extremely dangerous man. He is believed to be endowed with almost superhuman qualities of cunning and verbal dexterity, which are invariably employed to trick the simple soldier and to worst him in a discussion. A cheap laugh can always be obtained in an officers' mess at the expense of the politician. The average soldier never has any dealings with him unless he reaches one of the more responsible posts in the War Office and, even then, contact is comparatively rare except for the members of the Army Council and a few individuals. When it does occur the average soldier is enfolded in many layers of suspicion, which may never entirely disappear. The politician probably senses a good deal of reserve and he may consider the soldier slow-thinking and inarticulate, whereas in fact it may only be intense caution. If the politician waxes genial and frank in order to break it down, the soldier instinctively retires even further into his shell.

When I first took up my duties as military representative at Geneva, having a very modest estimate of my own

ability either to think quickly or to be ready in argument, I cast myself in self-defence for the rôle of the strong, silent man. I felt that any deficiency in strength could be more than made up by increased silence! I was fortunate in having my first contact with such kind and friendly Ministers as Lord Cecil and Sir Austen Chamberlain. At the annual Assembly different Ministers used to come out each year, and I also had dealings with other Ministers on Disarmament Sub-Committees of the Committee of Imperial Defence. I gradually perceived that all Service talk about politicians was the merest moonshine and gave up being strong or silent and became, I hope, my natural self! I do not profess that all politicians are angels but I have found them anxious to co-operate and to understand the soldier's point of view. I see no reason for the soldier to adopt the *virgo intacta* attitude in his dealings with them.

In my own small way, when I used to lecture in garrisons or at the Staff College on the League or on disarmament, I tried to tell the audience of my own impressions and to emphasise the importance of the politicians and the Services having confidence in each other.

The unhappy experiences of the War and the serious friction between the two that recent memoirs have brought to light, will have made the Higher Direction of any future war incomparably more difficult. Mr. Lloyd George seemed to judge all soldiers and sailors by their readiness of speech and power of exposition, while they felt that their job was fighting rather than debating and that the more they said the more they were likely to be misrepresented. I am less concerned to sit in judgment as to which were the greatest sinners than to emphasise the terrible consequences of mutual mistrust, concealments and disloyalties, if we have to fight again. As war

becomes totalitarian, the Higher Direction will become increasingly political. If a democratic and constitutional State is ever engaged in a conflict with a Dictator, the handicap is bound to be considerable. This is well brought out in the histories of the war in Abyssinia written both by Marshals de Bono and Badoglio. Decisions from Rome were instant; there was no need to wait for War Cabinets to meet or for strategy to be co-ordinated.

To my mind our problem of Higher Direction in war transcends all others. Much can be done and is being done by planning in advance but this will not avail unless there is the closest accord and complete confidence in the relations between the Prime Minister, upon whose personality everything depends, and the Service chiefs.

I must now turn once more to the aftermath of the breakdown of the Disarmament discussions, for it was immediately followed by the first steps towards rearmament which has steadily grown in momentum. The United States, Japan, France and Italy were openly increasing their armaments; it had become no less certain that Germany was doing so secretly. Great Britain, whose armaments lagged far behind, had also taken the first steps towards making good the most serious deficiencies. It was the general increase in air estimates that was peculiarly alarming. It was felt that strong steps must be taken to deal with Germany's breaches of the Treaty and consultations took place between British and French Ministers in London in February, 1935, with a view to fresh efforts to get a general settlement. It included proposals for a Western Air Pact on the lines of Locarno, which would include limitation of air forces. Each State would guarantee the others against aggression. Herr Hitler's reply to these overtures was cordial

and he invited British Ministers to Berlin to discuss all outstanding questions.

Two incidents then occurred which immediately preceded and possibly provoked Herr Hitler's dramatic decision to tear up the disarmament clauses of the Treaty. On March 4th the British Government published a Statement on Defence, which was intended to explain and justify their rearmament plans up to date. There were several references to Germany and one sentence plainly stated that her "rearmament unabated and uncontrolled . . . may consequently produce a situation where peace will be in peril." It was not perhaps too happily worded but it represented what most Englishmen were thinking at the moment. The effect of this in Germany was disastrous, as it again made them feel themselves pilloried as the sole cause of European tension, that it was a further denial of equality of status and that she was not to be allowed to rearm, although other Powers were proceeding to do so. Baron von Neurath intimated that Herr Hitler would be unable to receive Sir John Simon, who was on the point of starting for Berlin in response to the invitation, because he had a cold. The paper had in fact been published, in accordance with Parliamentary routine, to be in the hands of members a few days before a debate on defence. It was not a well-chosen moment. Eleven days later the French Government obtained a majority in the Chamber for increasing the period of conscript service from one year to two. The decision had long been foreseen. It was caused by a threatening international situation combined with the shrinking effectives of the "lean years." The number of male births during the war years 1915-19 had decreased to little more than half the normal. The class of medically fit conscripts for 1935 would be 118,000

instead of 230,000. When the law of 1928 reduced the service to one year in response to an almost universal demand, the General Staff thought that, by juggling with the time of calling up, it might be possible to obtain a "spread over" which would minimise the effect of the lean years, but presupposed a disarmed and defenceless Germany. The situation had now changed profoundly. The one year of service had proved extremely unsatisfactory yet the decision to abandon it only obtained the support of public opinion because of its manifest necessity.

Herr Hitler has always been something of a mystic, tending to rely upon his instincts and emotions at critical moments rather than the carefully-weighed advice of his Government Departments. "I move," he has said, "with the certitude of a somnambulist." He took his own decision on this occasion; it is believed that the strength he decided upon was much greater than the General Staff had contemplated. He was again to override their advice in his decision to enter the Rhineland a year later as a protest against the conclusion of the Franco-Soviet Pact. On March 16th, the day after the step taken by the French to double their effectives, Herr Hitler announced the formation of an air force and the enactment of a German law introducing conscription and creating an army of thirty-six Divisions.

The open denunciation of the Treaty had come at last. For some time it had appeared to observers inevitable, but this did nothing to lessen the anger and dismay which was universal throughout the world. Herr Hitler was running a risk of reprisals or sanctions in some form or another and only two years previously British Ministers had threatened to hold Germany to the Treaty by force, if necessary. Actually British public opinion

was in no mood for strong measures and the time had gone by when the reoccupation of the Rhine bridgeheads would be a military promenade. The French felt it much more deeply, as they saw the last vestige of the Treaty disappearing and with it their only security for the future against a stronger and more determined nation with a larger population and greater resources. The French Government knew perfectly well that Frenchmen would object to be mobilised for war beyond their frontiers, even against their hereditary enemy. Though the French army was very strong, the profound pacific feeling of the people was against a policy of adventure. They would not in any case have moved without our approval and support. The breach of the Treaty was flagrant and could not be ignored. Yet, looking back over the long history of German relations with the ex-Allied States, one could see some force in their argument that the Treaty had been forced upon the Germans under duress. They did not regard themselves as bound to respect the signatures of their representatives. Furthermore, the implied promise of the ex-Allies to disarm remained unfulfilled fifteen years after the ratification of the Treaty. Even the promise of equality of status seemed to be a dead letter if France, Italy and England were to rearm and not Germany. We were reaping the bitter harvest which we had sown by consistently failing to recognise the necessity of a gradual amelioration of Treaty conditions. The French in particular, when confronted with an army of 550,000 men, must have seen the folly of failing to accept an army of half the size in January, 1934, and a quarter the size in 1932. Strong and well-equipped as the French army is to-day, military preponderance is already shifting to the German side and within the next three or four

years the military hegemony of Europe will be in her grasp. What a world of difference it would have made to the future of mankind if French statesmen had been at certain critical moments a little more liberal, a little more far-sighted, a little more intelligent. British statesmen must bear some share of the responsibility for not fighting a bit harder each time for peace; they always seemed to hope that in a few months something else would turn up and another effort for an understanding could be made. They did not realise that the cup was being filled to overflowing and, as Germany waxed stronger every month, an immense and rapid rearmament was as certain as the rise of to-morrow's sun.

It was not for want of warning. The problem of "What are we going to do about Germany?" had been before French and British Cabinets for years. As I watched the temporising and the makeshift decisions, the leaning now towards France and now towards Germany, I could never understand why these clever men in both Cabinets could not take a longer view. It seemed to me that they were so harassed by the stresses of the day-to-day turmoil that a temporary agreement, which might lead to something else, passed muster as a policy. Forceful advisers were not wanting who said "Germany is the enemy: support France up to the hilt. No disarmament for the ex-Allies. Hold Germany to the Treaty." French Governments of the Right would have understood this. It was a long-term intelligible policy to take. It would not have been my solution and I quite understand that public opinion would not have backed it, at any rate before the Nazi régime.

The alternative, when a French Government of the Left came into power in May, 1933, was to say to them, "We must settle with Germany without delay. She

cannot be held down indefinitely and in twenty years she will be ready for revenge, which will be the doom of France. We must give her equality. Our armaments must gradually come down and hers must gradually go up. Our Locarno guarantee stands. We must save moderate government in Germany. There is no time to waste. If you don't back this, we shall pull out of Europe. It will be the end."

I can quite believe that such thoughts may have been in the minds of Cabinet Ministers, as well as of ordinary people like myself. But it should have been pressed relentlessly and Ministers opposing it in the Cabinet should have been forced to resign. I know enough of the machinery of government to understand that clear-cut alternative policies like these, A or B, Yes or No, black or white, are seldom possible. There are infinite gradations of each depending upon all kinds of "ifs" and "ands" as well as the personal prejudices of individual Ministers. The intentions of our government were excellent and they worked harder and more unselfishly than any other for agreement, but the effort was not sustained; there were too many cross-currents and too many compromises.

Whether it was wise for us to put our pride in our pocket and send Sir John Simon and Mr. Eden to Berlin, as if nothing had happened, is open to question. The French Government strongly disapproved. The conversations did at least have the advantage of discovering what was in Herr Hitler's mind. The two satisfactory features were that he would be content with thirty-five per cent of the strength of the British Navy and parity in air forces with France and Great Britain. The intimation that he had already achieved the latter so far as we were concerned came as a considerable shock to British Ministers as the figures that the Führer gave were

largely in excess of those that had been supplied by the Air Ministry to Mr. Baldwin when he announced them in the House of Commons during the previous November.

Meanwhile the French Government had decided to ask for an emergency meeting of the Council of the League for the purpose of arraigning Germany under Article 11 as a Treaty breaker. The long-standing friction between France and Italy had been ended by the Rome agreement of January and the two new-found friends were prepared to make a common front against Germany. They had mutually agreed to withdraw their troops from the Franco-Italian frontier, which allowed the French to move a number of divisions to the North-East while the Duce undertook to have eighteen divisions at the Brenner in case of an aggression by Germany or an invasion of Austria. One of the fruits of this agreement was the attitude of M. Laval towards sanctions against Italy a little later on.

It was decided that there should be a meeting at Stresa before the Council assembled in order that Great Britain, France and Italy might agree on a policy to be pursued. Mr. MacDonald, the Prime Minister and Sir John Simon represented Great Britain; Mr. Eden was absent owing to illness. The unity of purpose looked imposing, for the Stresa front was master of many legions and Germany stood completely isolated. Yet in reality the three Powers were thinking on entirely different lines. France, as always, was obsessed with the idea of pacts for isolating Germany, Signor Mussolini was brooding over Austria and the Brenner, and we were hoping to save Europe from the disastrous effects of the breakdown of the Conference and the added tension caused by the open rearmament of Germany. By careful drafting, the resolution to which the three Powers agreed

managed to contain something of their respective aspirations. Although it was then April, 1935, and Italian troopships were steaming southward through the Suez Canal, the British Ministers have stated that they did not at any time cross-examine Signor Mussolini as to his intentions.

The next move was to Geneva. In the course of the discussions at Stresa the French draft resolution was much toned down at the instance of the British Ministers, who were very unwilling partners in the whole sorry business. A solemn condemnation of Germany by the Council did her no harm, but Stresa and Geneva together must have looked uncommonly like an anti-German front and nothing was less likely to bring Germany back to the League, a consummation that the three Powers in their resolution professed to desire so eagerly. The proceedings, however, were relieved by one piece of humour, when Baron Aloisi, as representative of Italy, spoke feelingly in support of the resolution condemning the breaking of treaties. It nearly touched the heights of comedy that M. Litvinoff reached in the Jugoslav-Hungarian dispute, which I have described above, when he solemnly declared how earnestly his government condemned terrorism!

I was at Geneva during this Council meeting and my last official act was to be present at a secret meeting of the Council when I heard the Abyssinian representative plead for the immediate discussion of their appeal to the Council under Article 11, which was countered by Baron Aloisi, with his tongue in his cheek, who said that time must be given for the arbitration proceedings on the Wal-Wal incident to take place. The Abyssinian representative then asked for a guarantee that no further movements of troops should take place until the Committee had reported. It was received in stony silence and

no single State was found to support this perfectly reasonable suggestion by means of which war might be avoided or the potential aggressor be compelled to show his hand.

Two months later, on June 1st, 1935, I retired from the Army. The League of Nations was obviously becoming less important and the War Office did not consider that the services of a Major-General were required as military representative. I was offered the command of a Territorial Division and, almost simultaneously, the post of Military Correspondent to the *Daily Telegraph*. After consultation with my friends I decided to take the latter, in view of the fact that the long block in promotion made it impossible for me to rise very much further on account of age. I have therefore decided to bring this account of my experiences to an end at this point. I will add two further chapters.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE FUTURE OF THE LEAGUE

The League and Collective security. Manchuria and Abyssinia. The future of the League.

IN view of my long connection with the League of Nations, I feel an obligation to devote a chapter to my personal views upon its future, though there may be nothing very original in what I have to say. As I have written in an earlier chapter, I started by a disbelief in the League, born of ignorance and prejudice, but actual experience converted me.

When reduced to its simplest terms the idea of the League and Collective Security presents few difficulties. All disputes must be settled by peaceful means. All armaments must be reduced to a defensive level. In the event of any State becoming an aggressor in spite of its pledges, it would be stopped by every other combining to protect the victim. Everything therefore seems to be straightforward, provided that each member of the League keeps its pledges.

But, like many other apparently simple things, the reduction of it to formal terms proved a much more difficult matter. During the discussions in Paris, a considerable divergence of views occurred. Broadly speaking, the French pressed very strongly their conception of a super-State. They have indeed never abandoned it. This involved the Council of the League working as a Cabinet with executive power and acting by majority vote, which would rule the world by a series of decisions and decrees. There would necessarily be an International Force to ensure obedience to them, with an International General Staff to prepare plans to deal with every possible

aggressor. To the Latin mind, which believes in having everything meticulously provided for, this solution was perfectly logical. It did not, however, appeal to the Anglo-Saxon mind, which dislikes logic and prefers not to be tied too closely by the written word. It is significant that Great Britain is one of the few countries in the world that does not possess a written Constitution.

But the differences went deeper than mere form. The Anglo-Saxons did not believe in, nor were they prepared to accept, a Super-State which they felt would be quite unworkable. Decisions of the Council by a majority vote, particularly those to employ force, would not be accepted by States which had opposed them and there would be an endless succession of failures in co-operation on the one hand and threats of coercion by the Council on the other. So, in the end, the Anglo-Saxons had their way, but the French constantly kept their original ideas before the League and backed convention after convention which might gain their ends in another way.

The basic problems confronting the Committee in Paris must have been "what was to be the tribunal for settling the disputes?" How could it be made impartial? What about unanimity? How were sanctions to be organised? Who was to decide when an aggression had taken place? In the result the wording of the Covenant was deliberately loose as, in view of the novelty of the whole experiment, it was necessary to keep the door open for changing circumstances. Unfortunately, the very looseness of the drafting gives an opportunity for widely differing interpretations and even at the present day the meaning and the effect of some articles is by no means clear.

Since the League was formed there have been attempts to whittle down the plain meaning of the more drastic

articles. Indeed some of them have become almost a dead letter. For instance, Article 10 says "The Members of the League undertake to respect and to preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members of the League." Surely there can be no plainer English in which it is possible to state an absolute obligation. If this article means anything at all, it is that every Member of the League has got to fight, if need be, for the territorial integrity of every other Member. The Article goes on, "In case of any such aggression or in case of any threat or danger of such aggression, the Council shall advise upon the means by which this obligation shall be fulfilled." In other words, there is no question of the Council considering "whether" assistance is to be given, but only "how." Canada was the first State to complain that this obligation was too onerous. It was the Article that public opinion in the United States disliked most. An attempt was made to water it down by an interpretative resolution of the Assembly.

The same process occurred with the most critical Article of the Covenant, namely Article 16. Paragraph one of this Article enacts that "should any Member of the League resort to war . . . Members of the League undertake immediately to subject it to the severance of all trade or financial relations. . . ." The second paragraph goes on to say, "It shall be the duty of the Council in such case to recommend to the several Governments concerned what effective military, naval or air force the members of the League shall severally contribute to the armed forces to be used to protect the Covenants of the League." The ordinary Englishman reading that paragraph, marking particu-

larly the words, "in such case," might assume that if a State has resorted to war, military sanctions, in such proportion as the Council shall recommend, will inevitably follow as an obligation from all States. In other words, the rôle of the Council would be to co-ordinate the military action, decide the size of the contingents and so on. It all hinges on the meaning of the word "recommend." But this has been interpreted by the Assembly to mean that the recommendation is not mandatory and it is for each State to judge for itself whether or not it shall contribute any of its armed forces. Thus military sanctions become optional. But does the Covenant really mean that?

Article 19 again was intended to be the charter for what is now called "peaceful change." It states that the "Assembly may from time to time advise the reconsideration by Members of the League of treaties which have become inapplicable and the consideration of international conditions whose continuance might endanger the peace of the world." The Germans were undoubtedly led to believe that this article would provide the machinery for amending the treaty of Versailles. When China raised the question first under this article in 1929, it soon became evident that very little could be done. No one knows whether such "advice" requires unanimity or a mere majority vote, and, even if it were formally tendered, what is to happen if it is not acted upon. The League can in fact do nothing effective regarding treaty revision under this article.

I have no wish to labour these points too much and doubtless there will be better qualified critics to challenge them. But I must affirm that in my ten years' connection with Geneva I did see a steady watering down of the more serious obligations. The drafting of the Covenant

was a great feat of ingenuity and foresight but in the organisation of a new world order much of it was bound to be provisional and require amendment in the light of actual experience. Unfortunately it has proved almost impossible to get the Covenant amended and the only alternative, that of trying to get separate conventions such as the Protocol of 1924, ratified, with more binding obligations, has been singularly unsuccessful.

I will leave these "dry bones" of the League framework, which I only mention to show what some of the difficulties are, and turn to examine the League as a living organism.

Perhaps the greatest blow that it ever suffered was the refusal of the Senate of the United States to accept membership of the League. The presence of this great democracy would have brought an element of stability and post-war history might have been very different.

One would expect that an American representative on the Council would have spoken and acted with far more detachment than the European representatives and it is possible that the League would have been a less comfortable place than it was under the benign sway of Briand and Austen Chamberlain. In all probability America would never have acquiesced in the way that Germany was treated and our own Government would have been stimulated to more decisive opposition to French fanaticism. On the other hand the United States Government would have been hampered by the old advice of Washington to avoid entanglements in Europe, which appeals with such force to his fellow countrymen to-day. The powers of the Senate with regard to treaty-making would also have been a handicap. However that may be, the presence of the United States would have been an immense reinforcement for peace and would have

exercised much influence in helping to remove the all too well-founded reproach that it was a League of victorious States whose sole concern it was to maintain the *status quo* resulting from the Treaties of Peace.

The standard by which the League must be judged is its ability to prevent war; by this it must stand or fall. I know much of its beneficent social and economic activities; indeed, at the instigation of the Secretariat, they have been continuously expanded, somewhat to the detriment of the main justification of its existence. It has done wonderful work in connection with refugees, opium, white slave traffic and intellectual co-operation, to name only a few. It has also through its economic and health sections brought new life and solvency to countries that had been ravaged by disease or financially ruined after the War. But neither these nor countless other activities nor even the fact that the stately halls and echoing corridors of its new building provide a meeting place for international statesmen could of themselves justify its continued existence. If the League cannot keep the peace and if it ceases to be the political clearing house of Europe, it has failed in the object for which it was created and must inevitably die.

The past successes of the League in settling disputes and averting wars have been remarkable; I have referred to a number of them in earlier chapters. These produced a considerable feeling of confidence and when Germany entered the League and Briand and Chamberlain were at the height of their prestige at Geneva, one almost felt that the new order of things was secure. But, to the careful observer, there was an ominous similarity about these successes which rather discounted their value. They were nearly all disputes between small Powers, or if a Great Power was concerned, there was no idea of aggression on

its side. It seemed to me that the League system would never be really tested until it came into collision with a Great Power which was bent on mischief.

Let me very briefly describe the salient features affecting Collective Security in the two great crises of the League, Manchuria and Abyssinia.

The first storm burst suddenly on the League on the 18th September, 1931, when the Council was actually in session, in the shape of an aggression by Japan in the Chinese province of Manchuria. It was unfortunate that in the first struggle of the League with a Great Power it was to be one that was the most remote geographically and the least amenable to World public opinion. Ostensibly the trouble started with a scuffle on the South Manchurian Railway when a Japanese patrol professed to have discovered Chinese troops about to blow it up. Within three or four days, however, every important town in South Manchuria within reach of the railway had been occupied. It became clear that it was no haphazard encounter between patrols but a well-prepared plan by the Japanese military party to occupy all the key points in the province. China immediately appealed to the League under Article 11, and in spite of continued assurances on the part of the Japanese representative on the Council that their troops would withdraw to the railway zone so soon as Japanese life and property was secure, the area of their occupation steadily spread. By January 4th they had reached the Great Wall and thus the whole province had passed into Japanese control.

When the Council met under the Presidency of Monsieur Briand, who by that time was in a state of mental and physical exhaustion, it proceeded with its habitual deliberation. This was to prove fatal to the issue, for it was of vital importance to secure a quick

decision before the military party in Japan got the upper hand. I have always thought that if Sir Austen Chamberlain had been there and Monsieur Briand had not been visibly failing, the need would have been realised and something immediately effective would have been decided. There were, however, several adjournments and the Council was prepared to swallow the bland promises of withdrawal made by Monsieur Yoshizawa, the Japanese representative, who seemed to have a very imperfect knowledge of French and possibly misunderstood the course of the discussion and the questions put to him. Throughout the debates the Japanese suffered very much in the presentation of their case by the fact that their representatives, until the arrival of Monsieur Matsuoka, were poor linguists and lacked dialectical skill. The two Chinese representatives, Mr. Alfred Sze and Mr. W. W. Yen, were both educated at American Universities and spoke English perfectly. Moreover they possessed a poise and a forensic aptitude that stamped them as first-class advocates.

Meanwhile, public opinion in the United States was thoroughly roused and, as the result of a hint from the State Department, the Council invited an American representative to sit with them during the Manchurian discussion. This caused great elation in League circles and vistas of an American return to the League began to open to the eyes of faith. The American representative was careful to explain that the invitation had been accepted by virtue of their signature of the Nine-Power Pact. The Japanese objected to the presence of the American representative as being unconstitutional, for which there was no provision in the Covenant. Juridically he was probably correct, but the point was evaded by pretending that the invitation issued was a matter of

procedure and as such should be decided by a majority vote. After the first flush of enthusiasm, however, American public opinion, as usual, began to get anxious and co-operation dwindled into private conversations with individual members of the Council in hotel sitting-rooms. Yet in a general way American opinion remained wholeheartedly with the League, and later on their representative joined the Committee of twenty-two which dealt with the Lytton report.

To go back some little way in point of time, the possibilities of Article 11 were really exhausted when Japan voted against the Council resolution and so nullified it. The one concrete decision was to dispatch the Lytton Commission to the Far East with wide terms of reference. Later on came the outbreak at Shanghai. China then appealed to the League under Articles 10 and 15 of the Covenant and requested that the dispute should be transferred to the Assembly, where she would find more powerful support for her case. Little could be done by the Assembly Committee charged with the matter until the Lytton Commission had presented its report. It was discussed in the Assembly on December 6th and, in no spirit of sarcasm, it must be said in the case of the small Powers that their moral fervour and determination to carry out the Covenant to the letter varied noticeably in proportion to their geographical proximity to the scene of action. It was only natural that all the Great Powers with a considerable stake in the outcome of the discussions should have a much more sober outlook. A resolution, which bore the impress of compromise, was approved unanimously. It adopted the Lytton Report in substance and placed the blame fairly and squarely on Japan for the sequence of events, without any mention of Article 16 or of Sanctions. The one positive recom-

mendation was that no member of the League should recognise Manchukuo. This had already been voted on March 11th, 1932, a suggestion which owed its origin to Mr. Stimson, the American Secretary of State.

The result of it all was a disaster for the League. The aggression was deliberate and a whole province had been torn from China, while many thousands of innocent Chinese had been slaughtered in the process. It is no doubt true that Japan had a case against China, and her proper course should have been to have submitted it to the League instead of allowing the military party to take control. However that may be, the members of the League had completely failed to protect a fellow member from spoliation and collective security had proved a sham. Theoretically, a strong and determined Council and Assembly should have done their duty by immediately declaring Japan the aggressor and demanding that economic sanctions should be applied by every member of the League; but the League always hesitates or adjourns and rarely grasps the nettle. There were weighty reasons in this case for careful consideration.

If we face the realities of the situation, were economic sanctions ever possible? The condition of success was the presence of overwhelming naval forces in Far Eastern waters at the time they were imposed. The only fleet of a member of the League of any size was our own China squadron, and it was extremely unlikely that there would be any considerable contribution from other quarters. The British Government had to face very disagreeable alternatives. If sanctions were not imposed we should be failing in our duty to the League to which we were honestly attached, and would do it incalculable harm. The Government would also have to face strong attacks at home from the Opposition and from the very

large number of sincere supporters of the League. On the other hand there was strong reason to believe that, if economic sanctions were imposed, Japan's immediate reply would be to attack our naval bases at Hong Kong and even Singapore, and engage the China squadron wherever it might be found. At the height of the crisis the greater part of it, including the flagship, was in fact in the Whangpoo River with the Japanese in occupation of the lower reaches. We should then have been faced with a war of the first magnitude, which would have little popular enthusiasm behind it, with few allies, and fighting some eleven thousand miles from the home country and many thousands also from the nearest well-equipped naval base. It would have been necessary to dispatch the Grand Fleet from home waters at a time when political tension in Europe was severe and, after a series of naval engagements against the third strongest navy in the world in its home waters, we might then have had to retake Hong Kong. These were the stark facts of the situation and, even if Japanese attack was not a certainty, the risk was no light one. I have discussed the situation since these events with responsible members of the Opposition who are zealous supporters of the League. I put to them the military possibilities of the case which were, indeed, no secret to any student of the situation at the time. I was surprised at the levity with which they would have been prepared to accept the responsibility of a long war entailing the expenditure of much blood and treasure. Assuming that this reaction by the Japanese was probable—and everything pointed to this—I cannot think that the Government were wrong in refusing to lay such a burden on our people, unless they had firm guarantees from other important naval Powers that they would bear their full share in accord-

ance with their pledges under Article 16. Of this there was no sign.

There was, of course, a possible decisive factor in the situation which I have not yet mentioned, namely, the naval co-operation of the United States. From her geographical position and from her great strength, as well as her large share of the trade with Japan, active intervention by the United States would have been decisive. If she had, in conjunction with the League, broken off trade relations with Japan, it would have sufficed to ruin her. She certainly offered the most hearty co-operation and did everything possible to show her warm approval of the efforts of the League. Indeed, I think it is true to say that she would have wished to go somewhat further and was disappointed with the timidity shown at Geneva. But there was one gap in her promises and it was on this razor edge that the whole issue in the Pacific turned. Would the American fleet be there side by side with our ships to resist a Japanese attack either on them or on our naval bases?

I have studied Mr. Stimson's book *The Far Eastern Crisis* with the greatest care. In this he sets out in the most temperate and courteous manner the successive steps that he took to bring pressure upon Japan and his great efforts to co-operate with the League. One can discern a severe disappointment in what he believes to have been our failure on certain occasions to back up American initiative. It may well be that his view is correct and that our lukewarmness at the moment when the United States had offered to co-operate with both hands was a discouragement to the very anxious desire of American public opinion to prevent this outrage being committed. I have read and re-read what Mr. Stimson has written but nowhere can I find a reference

to any form of co-operation beyond joint diplomatic pressure. It is true that he mentioned that the presence of the American fleet at Hawaii would have a steadying influence if Japan tried to strike southward at French, British or American colonial possessions, but that is not a firm and precise engagement such as is indispensable when one is dealing with these great issues. It is, I suppose, a possibility that a more wholehearted joint co-operation between Great Britain and the United States would have overawed Japan, but subsequent history shows that the mere mustering of diplomatic support is unlikely to achieve its object without force in the background. I do not myself believe that the United States Government ever contemplated using its fleet for our immediate support, or that the public opinion or the workings of the American Constitution would have allowed it. There would, in any case, have been weeks or possibly months of delay and that would have been fatal, because Japan would have struck at once. At the crisis of the whole dispute at the end of January and early February, 1932, there was a series of telephone conversations extending over several days, between Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, the Prime Minister, and Sir John Simon on the one hand, and Mr. Stimson on the other. I believe that on one day the Foreign Office bill for telephone calls to America was £116! I have no idea what took place during these conversations, but when the lapse of time permits the record of them to be published, we may learn the secret of the extent to which the United States were prepared to give firm undertakings of immediate naval support. If, as I suspect, none were forthcoming, the tragedy could hardly have been averted. We were pledged to *collective* action and had no obligation to enforce sanctions practically alone.

I pass now to the second great battle for Collective Security. This time the aggressor was Italy.

The new crisis bore a certain resemblance to the Manchurian one. A Great Power was once more the aggressor, but it was not geographically remote and there could be no doubt in this case of the effectiveness of sanctions if they were firmly applied.

While the whole responsibility for the cynical rupture of a number of treaties and engagements must be borne by Signor Mussolini, it cannot in fairness be denied that he had some reason for doubting whether the League would take his attack on Abyssinia very seriously and he had legitimate grievances against that country. We know from Marshal de Bono's book that the Duce had determined upon the campaign as long ago as 1933 and Eritrea had from that date been gradually prepared as a base of operations. The final decision to bring matters to a head was taken early in 1935, the Duce wiring to Marshal de Bono that if the Abyssinians continued to refuse to attack he must take the offensive himself. Signor Mussolini had no doubt persuaded himself that in grabbing a large slice of Africa he was only pursuing a policy of which we had been the most successful exponents in the latter half of the nineteenth century. He almost certainly believed that, after the fiasco in Manchuria, the lip-service paid by members of the League to collective security was purely hypocritical. So far as France was concerned he had good reasons for thinking that he had her in his pocket. The Franco-Italian agreement of January, 1935, had given very important advantages to France which they were unlikely to abandon by forcing the issue at Geneva. There seems to be considerable evidence that in their conversations M. Laval had promised him a free hand in

Abyssinia though he subsequently denied this in the Chamber. Signor Mussolini must have been further confirmed in his view when neither M. Laval nor Mr. Ramsay MacDonald raised the question at Stresa at all, in spite of the notorious fact that large reinforcements were at that time (April) going from Italy to Eritrea. The feeble Franco-British diplomacy was further manifested when the Council permitted the Italian representative to resist discussion for months on Abyssinia's appeal to the League under Article 11.

The British Government then took a decisive step and authorised Sir Samuel Hoare to make his historic speech at the Assembly on September 11th, in which he declared "that they will be second to none in their intentions to fulfil within the measure of their capacity the obligations which the Covenant lays upon them" . . . and again "The League stands and my country stands with it for the collective maintenance of the Covenant in its entirety and particularly for steady and collective resistance to all acts of unprovoked aggression." This speech, prompted in some degree by the great success of the Peace Ballot, was an entirely new departure in this country's attitude towards the League. All the small Powers immediately rallied to strong leadership. Within a few days of the Italians crossing the frontier the Council and the Assembly had declared Italy the aggressor and laid plans for the collective enforcement of a limited number of economic sanctions applied to certain articles and raw materials, which were to begin on November 18th. This was the first time that they had ever been enforced and considering that no machinery for imposing them had previously been prepared, the delay was not excessive.

It was soon realised, however, that the key sanction

would be an embargo on oil, which had not previously been included as the whole supply of it did not come from members of the League. The attitude of the U.S.A., as in the case of Manchuria, had been one of complete approval of the action taken by the League and the President had immediately brought into force the neutrality machinery which had recently become law. The embargo, however, applied only to arms and ammunition and the President was powerless to control oil supplies. He had more than once appealed to the oil industry to limit its exports to the average of the past three years, but by the end of November the export of American controlled oil to Italy had, in fact, been trebled. The matter was examined by experts after considerable delays and they reported that, if all the members of the League applied an embargo on oil, it would be effective within 3½ months if the U.S.A. limited its exports to Italy to the normal level of its exports prior to 1935.

The position was now perfectly clear that, if the U.S.A. could be induced to pass the necessary legislation which they were then discussing, defeat stared Italy in the face. But the unfortunate Hoare-Laval proposals had far-reaching effects both in the U.S.A. and elsewhere. M. Laval was now completely under the influence of Italy and was determined to save the Franco-Italian agreement, even at the cost of the betrayal of the League and the sacrifice of the friendship of Great Britain. He was believed at the instance of the Duce to have warned Sir Samuel Hoare during the conversations that the Italian reply to oil sanctions would be an attack upon the British Fleet. He was also extremely obscure and lukewarm when categorically asked by us if the French Fleet would give us immediate support in such a con-

tingency. I will not attempt to apportion blame for the attitude during the Hoare-Laval crisis but the temper of the nation was such that they would never have consented at the time to such a compromise. It is the irony of fate that, humiliating as it then appeared to be, events proved that it would have secured for the Emperor and people of Abyssinia some remnants of freedom and sovereignty. Though Mr. Eden continued to press at Geneva for oil sanctions, he was outmanœuvred by M. Flandin, the successor of M. Laval, who continually succeeded in postponing their discussion by holding out hopes of conciliation. As the great effort of the League was trailing off to its inglorious close, the eyes of Europe were suddenly concentrated on the demilitarised zone where on March 7th, 1936, the field-grey columns of the Führer were taking part in another defiance of treaty obligations which he had only recently volunteered to observe. The time was well chosen, for the Locarno Powers were in manifest disarray and the League was hardly in a position to handle yet another first-class crisis with the necessary firmness. From that moment the possibility of oil sanctions was at an end; the French had been all too successful in blocking them and the time had obviously passed when they could conceivably be effective. The League could only stand by helplessly and watch the gamble as to whether Marshal Badoglio could beat the rains in his race for Addis Ababa. In fact he won by a short head. Had he failed it might have meant another five months stagnation and the war might not have been won. During the six months since sanctions had been mooted, oil from almost every oil-producing country, both within and without the League, had been steadily pouring into Abyssinia to enable the Duce to win the war which

some fifty nations had solemnly pledged themselves to prevent.

It is interesting to examine the British and French attitudes towards sanctions in this case. For both it was a complete reversal of their traditional rôles. Ever since the League had been formed, successive British Governments had tried to reduce our obligations, particularly under Article 16. The French, on the contrary, had continually tried to establish fresh ones and to tighten up those that existed. The argument used by the British Government had always been that we could not enforce Article 16 so long as the United States remained outside the League. By this we meant that if the League were engaged in applying sanctions and the British fleet was exercising its rights of search to prevent goods reaching the aggressor, it would have the unpleasant alternative of searching American vessels and running the risk of war, or of allowing the Americans to break the blockade. The general trend, however, of the American attitude towards the freedom of the seas in the last three years has been to introduce legislation by means of which it will completely disappear as a live issue. When war breaks out the President is required automatically to place an embargo upon arms destined for either belligerent, while passengers carried in ships of belligerent nationality will do so at their peril and gain no protection from the United States Government. The law also embodies the principle of "cash and carry," which means that raw material must be paid for in the United States in cash and the President has authority to prohibit its being carried in American ships. This would remove the danger of a conflict over the right of search of American vessels carrying raw materials to a belligerent. America outside the League had been a valid objection to Article 16

in the past, but it was not the whole objection. There was also a general feeling in the country against accepting, as Sir John Simon put it, "defined obligations in undefined circumstances."

The French had always gone to the other extreme in piling up paper guarantees for the one eventuality that they really feared, which was German aggression. If they had run true to form they would certainly have appeared "in shining armour" at our side as the champion of economic sanctions. France was, however, confronted by a situation which she had never envisaged, namely that instead of receiving protection from a world that was rushing to her aid, she was to play a leading part in according it.

It is difficult to say to what extent the British Government had turned its back on the past and decided to take a strong line or to what extent the result of the Peace Ballot inspired Sir Samuel Hoare's speech and their policy at the General Election. The Peace Ballot itself was a remarkable event and quite fortuitously the result was announced at the psychological moment for bringing a maximum of pressure upon the Government. Granted that some of the questions were what the lawyers call "leading" ones and to that extent open to objection, the fact remains that over eleven million people voted and nearly seven million gave an affirmative reply in favour of applying collective military sanctions if necessary. However one may argue about the unfairness of the questions or that people did not know or care what they really meant, one cannot explain away seven million votes, nor could the Government possibly ignore it. So far as I could judge public opinion during the Abyssinian crisis, it seemed to me that the sympathy with Abyssinia was profound, and that the people were absolutely

united in persevering with economic sanctions even at the risk of war, provided that other members of the League would support us to the best of their ability. There was a certain section who put mere sentiment on one side and felt, as did Sir Austen Chamberlain when he said to me, "I wish I had a better client." But I could not see eye to eye with Sir Samuel Hoare in the view that we could take the lead in economic sanctions against Italy and remain on friendly terms at the same time. Nor could I escape the conclusion that, after Sir Samuel Hoare's burning words at Geneva which I have quoted above, we ought to have blocked the Suez Canal against Italian shipping. This drastic step would probably have meant war with Italy but it would have saved the League. We should not have been fighting alone, as other Mediterranean Powers such as Yugoslavia, Turkey and Greece had promised their active help, whatever the French might have done under the Laval-Flandin régime.

Mr. Eden succeeded to a policy dictated by the country to the Government, with which it may be supposed that he was in entire sympathy. This was to drive on with oil sanctions but to carry France with us. Within these limitations no man could have done more than he did. The failure of the policy cannot be laid at his door. The evil genius was M. Laval. He would only agree to the imposition of sanctions that were not essential and he was obsessed with the importance of another link in the chain which was to encircle Germany. It is possible that he had to submit to pressure from the General Staff, who were naturally influenced by the importance of the promise of Italian military co-operation; but if a long view were taken there could be no comparison between Italy and Great Britain as to their value as an ally. What

were eighteen divisions at the Brenner Pass compared to the enormous resources and known tenacity of this country? M. Laval did not need to be reminded, though I warned my French friends, how soon the situation might arise when they would want our support against Germany under the Locarno guarantee. Much in that contingency would depend on their behaviour towards the League and the support they would give us at the critical moment. Any tendency to leave us in the lurch and make difficulties would hardly be an encouragement to afford them active co-operation when their time of trial came. If I had been Laval I should have gone to any lengths to demonstrate to British public opinion that the whole of French resources would be at our disposal as well as the immediate assistance of the French Fleet, should we be drawn into war. The crisis on the Rhine came with dramatic swiftness, while oil sanctions were still being discussed. The French Government called on Great Britain, as was their right under the Locarno Treaty. Our Government were in great difficulty owing to the pronounced pro-German feeling in the country, which was chiefly inspired by disgust at French behaviour over Abyssinia as well as the feeling that Germany was, after all, only re-occupying her own territory. Mr. Eden was, no doubt, conscious of these hostile undercurrents when he said in the House of Commons, "I am not going to be the first British Foreign Secretary to dishonour our signature to a Treaty."

There was a possibility of strong action by the French, but our lukewarmness naturally had its effect. I know that in the first forty-eight hours the French had contemplated the use of force and that the army was ready. They could easily have expelled the German troops from the demilitarised zone, as only 35,000 had been sent in and

Germany was then in no condition to fight. It was probably the last chance the French had of fighting a preventive war. I do not defend the morality of such a proceeding, but when the lives of nations are at stake desperate measures are taken and plausible legal justification was not wanting in this case. If they had confined themselves to ejecting the German troops it would probably have caused the downfall of the Nazi regime. In going into the zone it is commonly believed that Herr Hitler acted against the advice of the General Staff; he could hardly have foreseen how very nearly the French struck back.

It was a great misfortune for France and for the League that on the one occasion in which her supposed devotion to it was put to the test she should have been represented by the only Foreign Minister in the long and distinguished line of French statesmen holding that appointment since the War who did not believe in the League. If the crisis had been postponed for a few months there would have been a Léon Blum-Daladier combination in power and French policy would have been quite different. I confidently believe that oil sanctions would have been enforced and that with firm French support the aggression against Abyssinia would have been stopped. It is an interesting speculation whether Signor Mussolini would have reacted violently as his campaign was gradually strangled or not. When he knew he was beaten, he might have decided to go down fighting amid the ruins of his own régime and, like Samson, bring down the temple of European peace with him. As Lord Lothian recently said in *The Times*, Signor Mussolini is a much more experienced poker player than either British or French statesmen. He is, perhaps, sufficiently a realist to bow before facts.

I have given this brief sketch of two campaigns, the Abyssinian and the Manchurian, in order to try to estimate the bearing of these two practical experiences on the future of collective security. Is it possible to learn the necessary lessons from these two failures and rebuild the League into an efficient institution? A point frequently made by League enthusiasts—and a very valid one—is that it is not the League that has failed, but its constituent members. There is much truth in this. The League itself is only a piece of machinery and, so far as one can see, it stood the test, but in the face of two failures it is a fair deduction that the undertakings accepted by the members of the League proved too onerous in times of stress. Although St. Paul has said that "no one is tempted more than he can bear," the test seems to show that in international affairs obligations tend to become too heavy if they are in conflict with national interests.

Perhaps one of the greatest factors was the hesitation and delay of the Council. It is unfortunately one of the characteristics of Geneva procedure. It is said that Geneva "touches nothing that it does not adjourn," and in these two instances it was fatal. Japan in the early stages was uncertain, amenable to pressure, and promising to withdraw. It was only when the military party began to get the upper hand later on that she deliberately defied the Council. Short and sharp action would probably have nipped the whole thing in the bud. Again in Abyssinia after the incident at Wal-Wal in December, 1934, it became fairly obvious that Italy meant to attack the Emperor; but campaigning would not be possible till after the rains in October, 1935, several months after Abyssinia had appealed to the Council under Article 11. It is true that the Italian representative could

have blocked a Council resolution by the simple expedient of voting against it, as in appeals under Article 11 the votes of the parties to the dispute are not excluded. This is a serious defect in League procedure. The Council allowed themselves to be barred from discussing the dispute all through the summer, because Baron Aloisi, the Italian representative, solemnly protested that discussion would be improper while the farcical arbitration proceedings about Wal-Wal were going on. They came to an end exactly one month before the Italian Army crossed the Mareb river. I maintain that the Duce's intentions were perfectly obvious and the more deeply he committed himself in sending troops to East Africa the more difficult it was for him, for reasons of prestige, not to fight. Geneva was not so bankrupt of resources that the Council could not have devised a procedure to form themselves into a Committee to face the question of Abyssinia, while excluding the Italian representative. If they had talked firmly both individually and collectively to Signor Mussolini in February instead of October, the result might have been very different. It is much easier to prevent a war breaking out than to stop it when fighting is actually in progress.

Another noticeable point was the fact that England was expected to bear the brunt of whatever pressure was applied. France, whose statesmen had for years been so prodigal of promises of firm support of League principles, was, for differing reasons, a negligible influence in both cases. The small Powers were well to the fore, not only because they believed in the League but because the failure to act up to League principles in a crisis would imperil the security of all of them. In Manchuria the League as a whole made no material contribution, but in Abyssinia the whole League was in line for the enforcement of

economic sanctions. In one case it was too difficult to impose them, and in the other it was easy but good faith was lacking. The cause of the difficulty or of the disloyalty was due to the fear that economic sanctions from one side involved the risk of war from the other, which some States will always be loath to face. In the days of theorising about sanctions it used to be thought that economic sanctions would be a purely peaceful act and that the graver step of military sanctions would alone be likely to involve one in war. In this we are now undeceived and it is clear beyond possibility of argument that, against a Great Power at any rate, there is no such thing as a peaceful sanction. They all mean war.

Since these two failures and the resulting blow to League prestige, there was a time when I was in favour of the removal of sanctions of all kinds from the Covenant. I was much impressed by General Smuts's great speech of November 13th, 1934, in which he said, "If the attempt were now made to transform it (i.e., the League) into a military machine, into a system to carry on war for the purpose of preventing or ending war, I think its fate is sealed. I cannot conceive the Dominions remaining in such a League and pledging themselves to fight the wars of the old world, and, if the Dominions leave it, Great Britain is bound to follow.

"I cannot conceive anything more calculated to keep the U.S.A. for ever out of the League than its transformation into a fighting machine, pledged to carry out its decisions by force of arms if necessary. . . . A conference room of the nations the U.S.A. can, and eventually will, join; it can never join an international war office."

The view is attractive, but after considerable reflection and discussion I come to the conclusion that the League would not really work without what I heard Briand one

day call "a secular arm." I do not see how any State that was aggressively-minded and in a highly-excited condition would take the slightest notice of a Council in a purely mediatory capacity. If all countries were orderly, peaceful and law-abiding, such as, for example, Norway, Sweden or Holland, the decisions of a mediatory body would be accepted. But these conditions are the exception in the world to-day. The number of States which are well-armed, acquisitive, violent and lawless (liberty has been described by one dictator as "a stinking corpse"), is increasing, and words alone will not deter them from aggression or injustice. I can see no escape from the position that States who have banded themselves together in these troublous times to keep the peace must, in the last resort, have the power to enforce it.

General Smuts has suggested, and on the whole I agree with him, that the solution is to establish a series of regional pacts on the model of the Locarno Treaty, in which countries whom geography and common interest associate closely could join in a mutual guarantee of all the signatories against aggression in that area. States are more likely to fulfil their obligations when they coincide with their interests. The sentiment may be cynical and I loathe the conclusion, but it is the chief lesson that I draw from my experience with the League and the sole remaining hope of the principle of collective security. Purists object to the regional pact because it is founded on the sordid ties of self-interest. If I thought more highly of international human nature I should have some hope of building a system on such principles as Right and Justice, but I fear we have got to deal with things as we find them in the world to-day.

Even regional pacts are not all plain sailing. There is a danger they may become merely defensive alliances,

as for instance, the Franco-Soviet Pact, to which Czechoslovakia is also a party. If one tries to imagine the world parcelled out in regions the difficulties emerge. In what pact would Russia be? It is quite certain that Japan would not join the same one in the Far East, any more than Germany would join the same one in the West. In what pact would Great Britain not be? I can imagine hardly any portion of the world's surface, East or West, except possibly South America, that our interests would not necessitate our joining a regional pact. This would in its turn entail our assumption of obligations as precise as Locarno for the whole world, the very thing that we desire to avoid. I will not probe the practical difficulties of regional pacts any further, as they may be capable of solution. I do consider that, if the League is to survive, the system will probably be one of the methods of obtaining a limited collective security.

I should like to refer in passing to a remedy for all the ills of the League which the New Commonwealth has taken up, namely the idea of an International Police Force to execute the decisions of an International Equity Tribunal. I say at once that this would be the ideal method of settling disputes in a new World State, but it seems to be that the very mild compromise which the Covenant of the League represents has proved too drastic for present conditions. An International Police Force seems to me, therefore, to be little more than a dream. No one knows what the world will be like in thirty years time, or even whether civilisation will last. Beyond the lowering horizon there may, for ought we know, be a new dawn awaiting us. Until that appears I think we must concentrate upon what is immediately possible in the present situation, while hoping that in some future happier time these ideals may take practical shape.

What then is the future for collective security? It has twice been weighed in the balance and found wanting. We must not delude ourselves by mumbling glib phrases about our policy being still based upon the League and Collective Security. It is unfortunately no longer either practicable or true. I cannot imagine that there would be many backers if any member of the League were to stand up and propose the imposition of economic sanctions at Geneva to-day. I do not think that we can go on bolstering up the present League with only three Great Powers remaining in effective membership. Through no fault of its own the League has become one of two rival blocs—a very unsatisfactory position for an international body. The proof that the system has temporarily failed lies in the fact that every State, even the smallest and the most pacific, is rearming as fast as it can. There is no longer the slightest trust in the ability of the League to protect them and we are now back to the law of the jungle, as it was in 1914. The only thing left to us is faith in the rightness of a system which though in temporary eclipse may yet preserve civilisation from destruction.

If my analysis of the catastrophes which the League has suffered is correct, it indicates that the failure is due to the ingrained reluctance of any Government to run the risk of war and all the suffering and loss that it brings to its own people in order to preserve another State from aggression, unless its own interests are also at stake. That, at any rate, is my fundamental belief after spending ten years of intimate association with the League. To correct this would require a moral regeneration in the hearts of men all over the world which Jesus Christ alone could accomplish. Meantime to turn failure into success by human means we shall require something

much more drastic than new formulæ or mere amendments to the Covenant. If we cannot get it completely recast owing to the obstruction of the defenders of the *status quo*, we shall have to break up the present League and found a new one. This new League, to arise from the ashes of the old one, must be part of some great all-in settlement. If it is to be workable Germany, Italy and the United States must all be members. I should prefer to see Japan there also, but her very remoteness makes her presence less absolutely essential. When one remembers the jeers that have been thrown at the League by the totalitarian States, it will naturally be no light matter to induce them to reverse their policy. Equally, one is well aware of the deep-rooted objections that exist in the U.S.A. to becoming involved in Europe or to accepting any international obligations. I know that there are millions of earnest people who would say that a League of which Germany and Italy would agree to be members is not worth having. I can only reply that a League without them, however one may dislike their politics, will be impotent. I cannot see how the League can go on as it is to-day. Neither Germany nor Italy have failed to let us know what their objections are, and however disagreeable it may be, we shall have to make concessions to meet their views. The problem is so vast that I would not even try to sketch out what a reformed League might be. I would only say that I do not consider any League worth while which does not possess some form of sanctions to exert pressure on a breaker of the peace, and I hold strongly (I know this will meet violent opposition) that power in the League must depend upon responsibility and that in the big issues the last word must inevitably rest with the Great Powers.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE PRESENT SITUATION

The present European situation. Conclusion.

THE previous chapters have partially at least told of the gradual deterioration in international relations, so far as they came under my direct observation, down to 1935. The outlook since then has become increasingly sombre. The clank of hammers is sounding everywhere as the armaments race steadily brings war nearer. Collective security has disappeared and the rifts in the Covenant are becoming more apparent as the Scandinavian-Dutch-Belgian group and Switzerland have practically repudiated the obligations of sanctions incurred under Article 16. Roumania, Yugoslavia and Poland, at one time attracted to the French *bloc* by the vision of French military power, show signs of gravitating towards the Berlin-Rome axis in the belief that the sceptre of the military domination of the Continent may be changing hands.

One gains the impression, as one sees the feverish last-minute changes in the teams from one side to another, that they are beginning to line up and that the time for the "kick off" is approaching. As the possibility of a world struggle is almost daily canvassed in the Press and on public platforms, I feel impelled, in bringing these memoirs to a close, to add a few comments of my own upon the situation as it appears to me.

Rightly or wrongly, the impression is general that, if peace is to be broken, it will be due to the policy pursued by the totalitarian States. Their newly found power, their steadily increasing armaments, their aggressive

outlook and the glamour of militarism upon which their régimes are based, are bound to increase one's forebodings in an atmosphere already thick with wars and rumours of wars.

One can understand a certain flamboyance of utterance, a certain picturesque appeal to the gallery in Dictators' speeches, and one must realise that they are chiefly for home consumption. It is difficult, however, to believe that any man, who by genius and hard work has reached the position of complete autocrat and has done so much for the good of his country as Signor Mussolini and Herr Hitler have done, could in his heart of hearts desire to stake all that he has created upon the awful gamble of war. Even victory, if too long delayed, would probably bring about the downfall of their régime and Communism would inevitably follow defeat. Though both men have run considerable risks in the past, I almost doubt whether either would now embark on a war unless the odds were heavily in their favour. But they perfectly understand and exploit to the full the support that powerful armaments and a blustering manner give to the achievement of their future aims.

One wonders, in passing, how long the Fascist-Nazi idea of government is likely to continue. Is it a passing phase in world evolution born of the misery of defeat, for Italy too had the psychology of a beaten nation after the War? Or is it a form of government that will endure?

No doubt the leaders both in Germany and Italy have made arrangements for the permanence of their régime by fixing the succession in case of their own deaths; though both are surrounded by ambitious men who may upset carefully laid plans. Even if the succession passes smoothly it could hardly be expected that the new man

will have the genius or the dynamic qualities of his predecessor. History teaches us that revolutionary movements tend to become more liberal in outlook as time goes on and to shed some of the cruder trappings of absolute government. The régime, however one looks at it, is likely to take on a more sober tinge. I have discussed the question in Germany with responsible people and there was singular unanimity in the view that, on the passing of Hitler, Germany must return to a monarchy, though not of course a constitutional one. Reflection, however, upon the more remote future of Fascism is to some extent academic as in the next few critical years it will be with the Dictators that we shall have to reckon.

In surveying the conflicting objectives, the hopes and fears that go to make up the tangled web of the present international situation, it seems to me that Germany is the heart of it all and that upon her ultimate moves depend the issues of peace and war. I am well aware of the dangers of over-simplification in stating a problem; the ramifications of this one are in fact endless. Let me mention a few. When Germany's rearmament is complete in three or four years' time, will she seek expansion? If so, will it be east or west? Does she genuinely fear Soviet Russia? Is either capable of fighting the other? Will the Third International modify its aims? Will Germany still press for colonies? Will Germany and Italy fall out over Austria? Will Germany afford military support to Italy in attacking France and England in the Mediterranean? Or to Japan in the Far East? This may not exhaust the problems that confront us, but it is clear that Germany is concerned with most of them.

The issue once more is peace or war, as it was in 1914. Are we coming to the point when Great Britain, France

and Russia are to fight Germany and Italy to save free institutions in Europe, in company with such allies as can be mustered on either side? I believe that Herr Hitler has no intention of measuring swords with us again and he has no quarrel with France. On his eastern frontier he has no love for what the Soviet Government represents but he knows that invaders of Russia will meet the fate of their predecessors. Russia is believed to be incapable of a major offensive in Europe because her communications to the frontier are unable to maintain a large army; moreover, Poland, who is strong, is determined to be neutral and will fight either Power which tries to send troops across her territory. The Red Air Force operating from Czechoslovak aerodromes would be a serious menace to Berlin and towns in South Germany.

Westward there is the almost impregnable Maginot line and the French Army is very powerful, certainly stronger than the German Army at present. Our support would follow automatically and the intervention of our air force and our mighty fleet should be decisive.

Alternatively war might start in the Mediterranean with an Italian attack upon our possessions in the Middle East and spread northwards, with France and Germany drawn in on either side. An added complication for us might be simultaneous action by Japan against our naval bases in the Far East. This would involve some dispersion of our fleet, but if one coolly appreciates the situation from the point of view of this ill-assorted trio, held together by the slender bond of an anti-Comintern Pact, the prospect is not inviting and the risks considerable. The breaking point may come, alternatively, from the feeling of France and England that they cannot continue a passive policy towards Italy in the Mediter-

ranean merely because their love of peace is presumed on; they may decide to stand firm and call the bluff.

We can and in my view we ought, while even a 3 to 1 chance of peace remains, to reject the inevitability of war and make a supreme effort to try to negotiate a settlement. If we are to go any distance as mediators, we shall have to recognise that Germany, as well as the others, have genuine grievances.

It is true that Herr Hitler had announced after the occupation of the Rhineland in March, 1936, that Germany had no further territorial desires. Indeed, Signor Mussolini had made a somewhat similar observation after the conquest of Abyssinia. Yet however artificially the original agitation in Germany for colonies was created and in spite of the view expressed by Herr Hitler in *Mein Kampf* that Germany did not need colonies, there is no mistake about the reality of the demand to-day. One may suspect that it sprang chiefly from motives of prestige and from the desire to give the lie to the galling and indefensible pronouncement at Versailles that we took her colonies from her because she was unfit to have them. Despite certain lapses her record as a colonial Power has been good. In looking round Africa and the East it is difficult seriously to maintain that she is not at least as fit to have colonies as some of the existing colonial Powers. How much more honest it would have been if we had simply stated that we took them from her as the spoils of war. I find it difficult to make out a case that a Great Power like Germany is to be permanently prevented from having any colonies at all. I know the other side of the argument: the necessity for considering the wishes of the inhabitants, who cannot really be expected to give a free or intelligent vote, the strategic dangers of, say, Tanganyika in German hands,

the possibility of her naval bases along our trade routes, the fear that the natives will be militarised under Nazi rule and a black army raised.

Bound up with the question of colonies is that of raw material. A good deal of play has lately been made with the infinitesimal percentages of raw material which Germany extracted from her colonies before the War and the raw material that exists there to-day. But surely it is not for us, who are satiated with territory and raw material, to argue that these colonies are on that account useless to Germany and therefore we must keep them! I go further. I do not doubt that Nazi Germany, at its wits' end for raw material, would get their engineers, their chemists and their scientists to work and would succeed in extracting something they need from this undeveloped soil. We cannot compare the leisurely attitude of the old German Empire towards colonies, which regarded them as an expensive but fashionable toy, to the intense earnestness and efficiency of the new Germany. Indeed, whatever be the facts or possibilities of raw material, I cannot but recognise the equity of the German demand; though it is worth remembering that we are not the only colonial Power and are not the sole mandatories of former German colonies.

It is easier to admit the abstract justice of a point of view than to find a practical solution. I confess that I have none. I think the practical arguments, some of which I have indicated, against the return of colonies are strong, even if the majority of them are prompted by expediency rather than justice. The most hopeful line would be to have a Conference of an all-embracing character to try to settle all difficulties arising out of the Peace Treaties. In this the position not only of the ex-German colonies should be reviewed but of all colonies

of whatever character. It might at least be possible to get some more equitable distribution, particularly in Africa, among Powers whose previous record suggests that they would provide good administration, as well as the necessary capital for their development. I think that Germany would have to accept the principle of mandates for any colonies so received. This Conference would not deal with colonies alone, but with tariffs, currencies, economics, minorities, frontiers, raw materials, and the *status quo*. It would be a most difficult and intricate business but, if successful, it would go far towards getting rid of the distinction betwen the "haves" and the "have nots," the *status quo* and the revisionist blocs, and, given a certain amount of goodwill, might bring peace to this much harassed world. The essential point about such a settlement would be—I hesitate to use the word "final" because there is no such thing in international affairs—that it must have some degree of permanence and must not be used as a jumping-off place for fresh demands by a "have not" Power. That was inevitably the character of the piece-work settlement such as Stresemann, Briand and Austen Chamberlain were almost unconsciously trying to make.

The grievances of Italy are at the moment concerned with the recognition of Abyssinia; though it cannot be supposed that this concession would convert her permanently into one of the "satisfied" Powers. Her aims lie deeper than that. She realises her very unfavourable strategical position in the Mediterranean and has sought by intervention in Spain, by occupying the Balearic islands and sundry other aggressive acts to challenge our position as a rival Mediterranean Power. Behind all this, no doubt, Signor Mussolini dreams his dreams of a great African empire stretching from Libya

to the Red Sea littoral, if we are ever so foolish as to relax our hold on Egypt and the Nile Valley.

If Italy were able to realise that we are too strong to be moved by threats and that we harbour no designs against her, there is no reason why the Powers should not again live together in amity. But there is one prerequisite to an agreement; Italy must make good her many unfulfilled undertakings and withdraw from Spain first. There can be no peace in the Mediterranean while a covert international war is proceeding.

The settlement I try to visualise must be accompanied by some form of arms limitation. I do not forget that we have recently initiated the greatest programme of rearmament that the world has ever seen. I am profoundly thankful for the step, even though it has come rather late, for in it I see the greatest hope of peace. I use the word "limitation" advisedly. I have made the suggestion earlier in Chapter XIII. The first stage would be the publication of programmes to eliminate secrecy, and the second the abolition of certain of the heaviest and most offensive armaments. There might be years between the two stages; but if the Great Powers knew one another's programmes competition at least would be at an end and Governments would know where they were. I believe the proposal would be accepted with a sigh of relief from Powers who must be near the end of their financial tether. It would come best from us who can outlast the whole of Europe put together in a game of Beggar-my-neighbour.

I have no wish to dogmatise upon the method of approach to the problem, but I do feel the importance of England acting as mediator and dealing with Germany alone in the first instance. Germany is not the only dissatisfied State but she is certainly the most powerful

and an outline of an agreement between these two great countries would give confidence to their friends. We have obligations to France which we shall continue to fulfil and, whatever may have been the case in the past, I think Germany now understands that she cannot drive a wedge in between the two countries. A settlement by Germany will equally exercise a profound influence upon her colleagues in the tri-partite Pact. An aggressive policy by Italy or Japan is less likely if it is known that German support would not be forthcoming.

Finally, I believe, as I said in the previous chapter, that there must be a League, perhaps a new one risen from the ashes of the old, which will play an essential part in ensuring the peace of the world. In these pages I have made many criticisms of the League but, looking back over the changes of the past ten years, I feel convinced of the necessity of an international organ of this character.

I have spent seven years of my life at war and I know something of its horror and its futility. It is a melancholy reflection that our civilisation has not yet succeeded in finding any sure means of righting a wrong or settling a dispute save by the wholesale massacre of one's fellow creatures.

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